

WILD WEST

WEEKLY

A MAGAZINE CONTAINING STORIES, SKETCHES ETC OF WESTERN LIFE.

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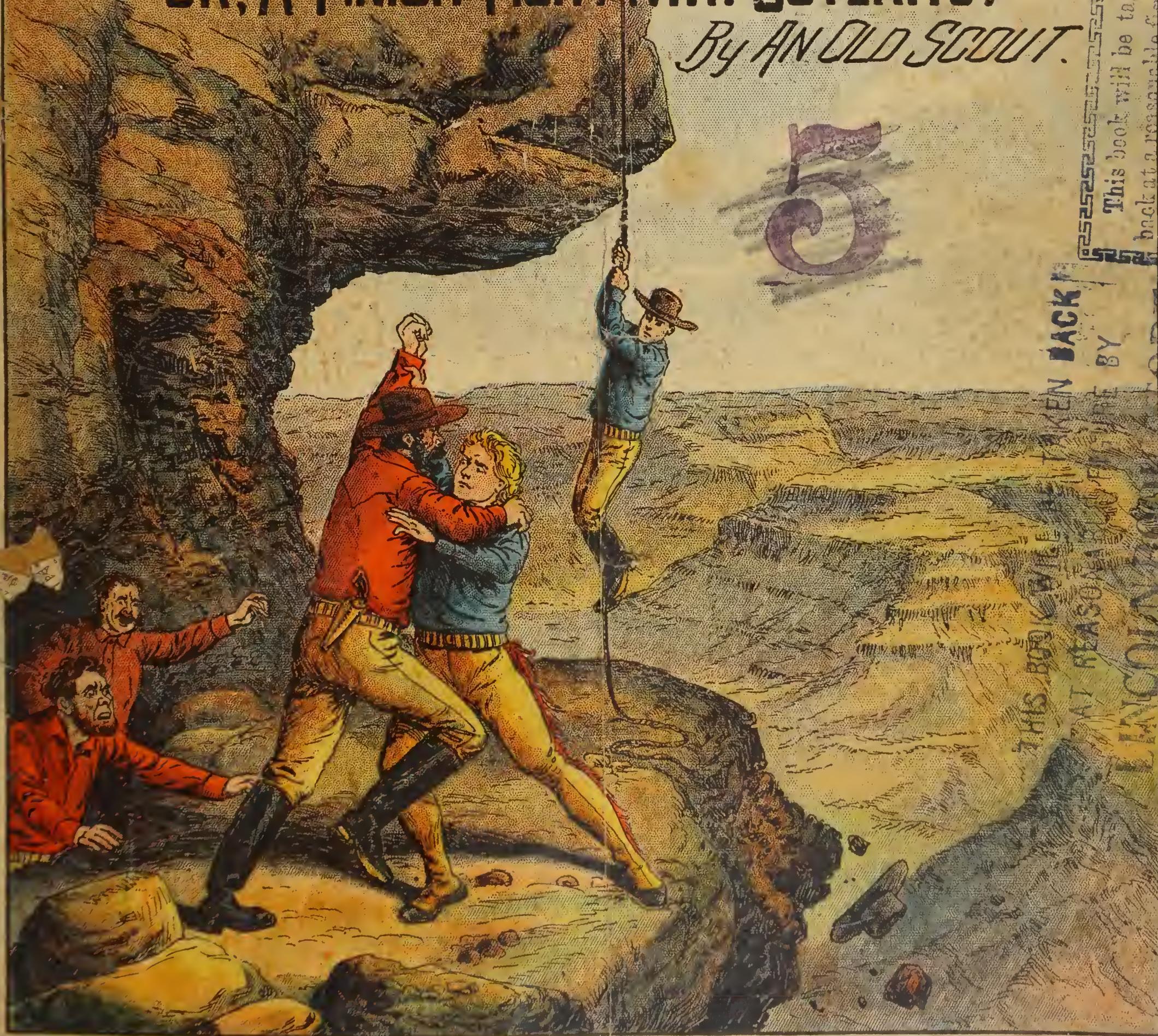
No. 66.

NEW YORK, JANUARY 22, 1904.

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YOUNG WILD WEST IN THE GRAND CANYON! OR, A FINISH FIGHT WITH OUTLAWS.

By AN OLD SCOUT.



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YOUNG WILD WEST IN THE GRAND CANYON;

OR,

A Finish Fight with Outlaws.

By AN OLD SCOUT.

CHAPTER I.

AT THE GRAND CANYON.

Young Wild West and his two partners, Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart, were seated on the veranda of a leading hotel in Leadville one morning, smoking and chatting in their usual free and easy manner.

All three had on brand new hunting suits, and each wore a costly blue silk shirt, which showed them up well, as they kept their coats unbuttoned.

They had just finished the starting of a smelting plant at a mine they were interested in about a hundred and fifty miles south of Leadville, and now they were thinking of going home.

"Boys," said Young Wild West, as he threw back the wealth of chestnut hair that hung over his shoulders, "Leadville is only a new town, but still there isn't anything so lively about it after all."

"You're right!" exclaimed Cheyenne Charlie, as he felt for the beard that he had just shaved off that day, and not finding it, turned his attention to curling his handsome dark mustache. "That's right, Wild. In ther three days we've been hangin' around here there's only been a double weddin', a cave-in in one of ther mines, two shanties burned down, an' ther hangin' of one poor, miserable horse thief. It are apt to make a feller feel lonesome, I guess."

"Well, there might be something on in Weston when we get back," observed Jim Dart.

"There might be, but it isn't likely," and the scout took his hand.

"You fellows need not worry," laughed the young dead shot who had been nicknamed the Prince of the Saddle. "Something will turn up before long. It always works that way, you know."

While they sat there talking a horseman wearing the uniform of a United States cavalry officer rode up and dismounted.

He looked at our three friends keenly and hesitated.

Then he turned to the door of the barroom and went inside.

But it was scarcely a minute before he came out in company of a big, good-natured looking cowboy.

"That's him right there! That's Young Wild West, ther Champion Deadshot of ther West an' ther Prince of ther Saddle!" cried the latter, pointing to our hero.

"Thank you, my friend," answered the officer, and then, as Wild arose, he stepped forward and greeted him.

"Mr. West," said he, "I bear a dispatch from Fort Mohave to you."

Young Wild West was not a little surprised when he took the sealed envelope from the officer.

But when he thought a moment later that the government always placed the greatest confidence in him as a scout he easily imagined that he was wanted for some important duty.

He tore open the envelope and read the following:

Dear Mr. West: Upon the advice of the commandant of Fort Bridger, Wyoming, I write to you to request your immediate presence at the Grand Canyon of Arizona. You will of course bring your partners with you. My adviser informs me that you are one of the special scouts of the

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government, and that you will doubtless comply with this request. If it is possible for you to come, please answer by bearer.

Yours, etc.,

GENERAL NIXON,
Commander, Fort Mohave.

"Boys, I guess that means that we can have a little exercise if we want it," observed our hero, and then he read the message to them.

"That sounds good," nodded Charlie. "Ther Grand Canyon of Arizona is liable ter furnish somethin' in ther way of excitement, I reckon."

"Are you going, Wild?" Jim asked, expectantly.

"Going? Why, certainly. Haven't I always told Uncle Sam that he could depend upon us any time it was possible for us to leave Weston? And are we not away from home now? It won't matter if we are away a few weeks longer, I guess."

"Hooray fer ther Grand Canyon!" shouted Cheyenne Charlie, taking off his hat and waving it in the air.

"You seem to be rather enthusiastic," said the officer, with a smile. "More so than my men. But I guess I had better introduce myself. I am Lieutenant Harry Snyder, of the Eleventh Cavalry, Nebraska. I was sent out with a detachment of eight men to deliver this despatch to you personally. It has taken me over a month to find you, but it is better late than never."

"Oh, that is what people say!" laughed Wild. "But there 'are some cases when it is better to be right on time."

"You are right; but this is a different case. Now, then, since you have signified your willingness to go to the Grand Canyon, I want to tell you that my instructions are to act strictly in accordance with your advice in getting there. The Grand Canyon is five hundred miles from here, and it will take us about two weeks to get there."

"Something like that, I guess. Well, all right! We will go with you just as soon as we write letters home to let the folks know what is keeping us away."

"I am very glad that you are going, for, though I never met you before, I am satisfied that you know your business thoroughly—all three of you, I mean."

"Thank you for the compliment," and then all hands bowed to him.

"I have a way of always saying what I mean, gentlemen," observed the lieutenant, who must have thought they had an idea that he was flattering them.

"So have we," spoke up Dart.

"You kin jest bet your life on that!" added the scout, drawing his tall, straight form up to its full height.

The lieutenant smiled.

"I guess we understand each other," he said.

He was a fine looking young man of twenty-five, who had worked his way up from a private in the ranks.

That he meant to make his mark in the military world was evident by his manner and general bearing.

"Suppose we arrange to start on the journey to-morrow morning?" he said.

"That will do nicely," replied Young Wild West.

"Ain't yer goin' ter take me with yer ter find ther Grand Canyon, Wild?" spoke up the cowboy, who had been standing in silence during the conversation.

"I don't know about that, Davy. You would want to wrestle with every Indian or bear you met, and every time you got the chance you would be getting full of tanglefoot. I don't know about it."

"I understood that there were three that always accompanied you," remarked Lieutenant Snyder, who had evidently taken a notion to the cowboy.

"That's right," answered Young Wild West. "Jack Robedee made up the fourth man, but he is home in Weston. Jack can't get around like he used to. A cork leg is not nearly as good as the real thing, you know."

"I should say not!" exclaimed the cowboy. "Well, you jest take me with yer! I've got two good legs, an' you kin bet I'll do everything you say, even if it is to ride through a bank of solid fire a mile deep."

"All right, Davy Driggs! You get ready to leave tomorrow morning."

"Oo-woo-woo-wow!" roared the man, in a voice that rivaled a steam whistle. "I reckon ther real bad man of Leadville is goin' on a hot expedition. Wait till I let myself loose once!"

Then he began dancing a few steps of a breakdown with such force that he kicked a board loose from the stoop.

This man Young Wild West had become acquainted with in Leadville by simply throwing him out a couple of times when he was making himself a nuisance.

It had been the means of making a man of him, though, for, being honest and good-natured, it was easy to build up the rest of a good character in him.

After he had a little further talk with our friends Lieutenant Snyder mounted his horse and rode back to the postoffice, where he had left the eight men who had accompanied him in the search for Young Wild West.

He found them, and when he apprised them of the fact that the young scout they had been long looking for had been found they seemed to be very glad.

They were all picked men from the lieutenant's command, and they were rather glad that their long jaunt over the country in search of Young Wild West was done.

Early the next morning a party of nine cavalrymen and four scouts rode out of Leadville and headed southwest.

They were the detachment from the Eleventh Cavalry of Nebraska, Young Wild West and his two partners and Davy Driggs, the cowboy.

The latter was attired in great shape.

He had on a new pair of high top riding boots, corduroy trousers, buckskin hunting coat, and a sombrero that was the broadest he could find.

A belt about his waist fairly bristled with weapons.

making him have the appearance of a very formidable character, indeed:

And he was when it came to the test.

The first day the party covered fifty miles.

As the lieutenant was provided with everything necessary for such a journey, it mattered not whether it rained or shined.

Two packhorses carried their tenting outfit and other supplies.

Though it was a very wild country that they were traveling through, nothing occurred to interrupt the journey, and on the thirteenth day out they reached the Grand Canyon.

The lieutenant had told Wild that though he did not know what the orders would be, he had an idea that they were to hunt down a desperate band of outlaws that infested the canyon, preying upon travelers, and even attacking the soldiers as they rode from place to place with dispatches.

"You will find out all about it when you reach my command," he said. "It ought to be somewhere around here. They were to be camped on the south bank of the Colorado river, and in sight of Snow Peak. There is the river right off to the right of us, and there is Snow Peak right ahead."

"That is as sure as you live," nodded Wild.

"Ah! Here is the trail that will no doubt take us to the camp," and the lieutenant led the way to the right in a sharp turn.

It was a fine day in the spring of the year, and the splendid scenery of the Grand Canyon showed up in all its glory.

The vast tract of land that bears the name is, for the most part, not accessible to travelers.

There are peaks thousands of feet high, and rifts so deep that no measurement has been taken of them.

At the time of which we write the Grand Canyon was even more wild and picturesque than it now is.

Then it had just the finishing touch of the hand of Nature. Now the whistle of the steam engine echoes from its mountains in some parts.

As Young Wild West and his party struck the well beaten trail that ran along the bank of the Colorado river the sun was slowly nearing the line of the western horizon.

On one side of them the river flowed in a snake-like course, and on the other fantastic shaped peaks and ridges of rock and earth reared.

It was the first time our hero and his partners had ever been there, and they made up their minds that the Grand Canyon of Arizona was well worth seeing.

Wild mountain goats could be seen grazing on narrow ~~edges~~ far above them, and the nests of eagles could here and there be seen on some dizzy height.

"There are plenty of bears around here, I reckon," observed Cheyenne Charlie, who was very partial to the ~~skins~~ that could be cut from the hams of brin.

"There is everything to be found here, from a rattle-

snake to a thieving Indian," replied the lieutenant. "I _____,"

He did not finish what he was going to say, for at that instant the report of a rifle sounded, and one of the cavalrymen threw up his arms and fell from his horse.

CHAPTER II.

DOOMED TO A HORRIBLE DEATH.

No one was expecting anything like a shot being fired at them, and when the cavalryman dropped with a bullet in his brain it meant that there were enemies about—of the cowardly species, too.

The report of the rifle had hardly died out when Young Wild West caught sight of the smoke that was caused by it.

But that was not all he saw!

His sharp eyes picked out the form of a man lying at full length on the edge of a cliff.

The distance was not more than two hundred yards, and our hero decided to show the scoundrel that there were just as good shots as he in that part of the country.

Without dismounting Wild threw his rifle to his shoulder.

Crack!

As the report sounded the body of the man rolled over the cliff and came tumbling down to the rocks below.

"Now get to cover!" cried the young deadshot. "There are more of them behind the rocks up there. Ah! What did I tell you?"

Half a dozen shots rang out in quick succession, and another cavalryman dropped.

There were several big boulders near, and Young Wild West quickly dismounted and led his horse behind them. The others followed him in a twinkling.

"Those men are outlaws!" the lieutenant exclaimed. "They mean to shoot and rob us, I guess."

"Well, if they want to try anything like that let them come!" answered our hero. "It's too bad that we have lost two men!"

The lieutenant shook his head.

"I would liked to have got back to my command before anything like this happened," he said.

No more shots were fired for the next five minutes.

Then suddenly there was a wild yell right behind them, and a score of desperate looking men pounced upon them.

"Give them fits, boys!" cried Young Wild West, and then his revolver began cracking.

Three men dropped before his unerring aim, but it was no use.

The outlaws were of the reckless and determined sort, and they kept on coming.

Cheyenne Charlie called out for Wild to retreat, but

before the boy could do so the butt of a heavy revolver struck him on the head and he fell over backward, dazed, but not unconscious.

And before he could recover himself he was seized and held tightly, while his weapons were taken away from him.

"We will take him and the lieutenant," he heard a voice say. "The rest can go for the present. We might be able to make some money out of these two. The boy seems to be something out of the ordinary."

Then Wild was picked up and carried back among the rocks.

He could hear the shooting going on yet, which meant that his companions were making a brave fight of it.

Though conscious of everything that was going on, the boy could not seem to find the use of his tongue just then.

When he had been carried back a short distance he realized that he was in a big crowd of men.

That proved that only part of them had made the attack.

"Blindfold them, boys!" he heard the same man that had spoken before say, and then he knew that they must have Lieutenant Snyder a prisoner, too.

Then the sounds of shooting died out, and the boy was picked up and carried bodily for a distance of perhaps a hundred yards.

He was then deposited, not over gently, on a rough, rocky floor.

A moment later a form was dropped at his side, and then, finding the use of his tongue, he exclaimed:

"Is that you, lieutenant?"

"Yes," came the quick reply. "I am not alone, then."

"No! They got me in spite of everything that I could do. If I hadn't got such a fearful crack on the head I'll bet there would have been a few more of them go under before they got me."

"Here! You just shut up!" cried a voice. "We don't allow that kind of talking here."

"You don't, eh? Well, let me out of here, then. That would be a good way to stop me," said Wild, coolly.

"You seem to have plenty of nerve, I must say," was the reply. "Well, I guess it will soon be taken out of you. Cap'n, this youngster seems to be awful sassy."

"Bring them both over here," was the reply.

Our hero recognized the voice as that belonging to the man he had heard speak before he was carried away from the spot where he went down.

"Shall I take ther blindfolds off their eyes, cap'n?"

"Certainly! They can have a chance to see the fine headquarters of the outlaws of the Grand Canyon, then."

The next minute Wild and the lieutenant were lifted to their feet and the hoodwinks taken from their eyes.

As it was not very light where they were, they at first could not see good, but they soon became accustomed to it.

Then they saw that they were in one of the many vast caves that are so common in that section.

This particular one seemed as though it had been specially formed for the use of just such a band as had taken up its headquarters there.

The ceiling was high and in fantastic curves and shapes, with a crack that ran half way around in a semi-circle.

Through this the light came, and out through it went the foul air and smoke from the fireplace built of stone and clay directly beneath it in one corner of the cave.

The floor was pretty level, and covered a space of probably two hundred square feet, which was divided off into irregular nooks and minor cave-like places.

There were tables, chairs, stools, boxes and barrels scattered around in plenty, and on the side opposite the rift in the roof there was a double row of bunks.

As Young Wild West took all this in he wondered where the entrance was.

But suddenly he caught the sound of horses stamping, and as it came from the farther end of the place he concluded that it must be in that direction, and that the stable was there.

The dashing young Prince of the Saddle was very much surprised when he saw all this.

If the government was trying to suppress this band of desperate men it was no wonder they had had trouble in doing so.

But why had the soldiers not been able to do it? This was the question he asked himself.

In spite of the position he had been placed in, Wild thought of all these things.

The man who had called them up to him had given them ample time to take in their surroundings, and as the two captives looked at the vast interior of the cave and the furniture and men who stood and sat around he smiled through the black mask that he wore.

There were at least fifty men in the cave, but he was the only one who wore a covering to conceal his face.

He stood on a big flat stone in the end of the cave that came to a point in the form of a V, and in the handsome velvet suit he wore he certainly made a rather imposing appearance.

"Well, have you looked around to your full satisfaction?" he asked, when the two finally ceased looking about and faced him.

"Yes," answered Young Wild West. "I think I will know the place next time I come here."

"The next time you come here! Ha, ha, ha! You are quite a joker, it seems."

"I'm no joker," retorted Wild, bound to carry out the part he always played under such circumstances.

It was not the first time Young Wild West had been captured by outlaws—not by any means.

He was used to being in such dangers.

"You are no joker, eh? Well, how about you, my friend?" and the masked captain of the outlaws turned to Lieutenant Snyder.

"I have something to say," was the reply.

"Well, that shows good sense, anyhow. But I must insist upon you answering a few questions. You are the man who was sent away on an important mission some weeks ago, are you not?"

"I decline to answer."

"You do, eh?" and there was an angry flash from the eyes that shone through the holes in the mask.

The lieutenant remained silent.

"I will find a way to make you tell me all I want to know, presently. Now, sir," turning to Wild, "who are you, anyway?"

"I go by the name of Young Wild West," was the quick retort.

"What!" and the captain started back in amazement.

"Does it surprise you?" asked the boy, and he put on a smile.

"Does it surprise me? Well, a little. I heard that Young Wild West had been sent for to help hunt out the outlaws of the Grand Canyon; but I did not have an idea that he was only a boy. So you are Young Wild West, eh?" and the villain appeared to be amused.

"Yes; that's who I am. Now please tell me who you are?"

"I will do that, young man. I am Captain Cack, the leader of the outlaws of the Grand Canyon. My band is composed of the greatest criminals in the whole West, and the government soldiers can never put us down as long as we want to operate here. Why!" and he broke into a loud laugh. "The officers themselves furnish good game for us. We generally hold up three or four of them every payday. And you are the wonderful Young Wild West they sent for, are you?"

"I don't know how wonderful I am," answered our hero, keeping as cool as an iceberg, "but I guess I will be able to give you a pretty good run for your money."

"See here!" and the outlaw captain spoke sharply. "Do you realize that you are never going to leave this cave alive?"

"I do not."

"Well, realize it at once, then. You say that you are Young Wild West, and the saying of that, whether it is true or not, is sufficient to seal your doom."

"How did you learn that the government authorities sent after me?" questioned Wild, not paying the least attention to what the man said last.

"How did I know it? Why, I have a way of finding out what is going on in military circles. Some of the cavalrymen are very good friends of mine."

"Oh!"

If ever Young Wild West had played a game of coolness in his life he was doing it now.

Captain Cack, as he called himself, could not quite understand him.

It seemed as though he was studying what to say to him.

After a short time he exclaimed:

"Young Wild West, I am going to see how much nerve you have got. You have got to die, anyway, and I may as well give my men a chance to watch you as you face certain death."

"If you want to see how much nerve I have got just cut my hands free and hand me my revolver. Then you pull your shooter and face me. That is when real nerve counts! I guarantee you that if you do that you will be a dead man in less than ten seconds. I never allow a man I am looking at to get in the first shot, and when I pull a trigger it means something every time."

"Go through them and take what money and valuables they may have," said the captain, turning to the two men who had conducted the prisoners to him.

It so happened that Young Wild West had sent most of his ready cash to Weston, and the only thing, outside of a hundred dollars or so, that he had was a draft on the Wells Fargo bank at Leadville.

This was for the amount of ten thousand dollars, but it had not been endorsed by him.

Our hero kept this in a little pocketbook that he carried in an inner pocket of his silk shirt, and when the outlaws searched him they failed to find it.

They took the money he had, and also that of the lieutenant, and seemed to be pleased over it.

"Now," said Captain Cack, "fetch the great and nervy young man who has been brought to the Grand Canyon to hunt us out over this way. We will hang him over the boiling sulphur well with a tarred rope, and then set fire to the rope!"

The face of Young Wild West turned a shade paler.

But he did not flinch under the gaze of the outlaw chief.

"Do you think you will beg and plead for your life when the rope begins to burn?" went on the captain, his eyes gleaming with evil delight through the holes in the mask.

"If I have got to die I can do it like a brave man," answered Wild. "But I don't think I will die just yet."

"You don't, eh? Let me show you how mistaken you are. You were brought here to encompass our destruction, if you are Young Wild West, and that means that you have got to die! You shall be smothered to death in boiling sulphur!"

Two of the outlaws seized Wild and dragged him to the further end of the cave.

CHAPTER III.

THE SALTER FAMILY AND THE HOUSEBOAT.

Floating slowly down the red-tinted waters of the Colorado river on the same day that our story opens was a rather peculiar looking flatboat and houseboat combined.

The man who had built it evidently had ideas of his

own, for to a great many the thing would have resembled some sort of a floating fortress.

It was about fifty feet in length and twenty-five wide, and taking up nearly the whole deck was a low loghouse.

There were no windows in this, but here and there a window could be seen, while a chimney of mud and sticks protruded above the roof at the rear end.

The boat simply floated along with the current, and had a long paddle, or oar, projecting over the stern, which no doubt kept the craft in the middle of the stream.

The handle of the oar, which rested in a socket directly in the center of the stern piece, ran right into the loghouse through a slit that extended nearly the entire width of it.

Inside this house boat, as we shall call it, on this particular afternoon we find four men, a woman and two girls.

They are all of one family, being grandfather, father and son, and mother and daughters.

Grandpop Salter was a peculiar personage, and it was he who had built the house boat.

He had lived with his son's family in a mining town in the southern part of Utah for a number of years.

But one day he got it in his head that he wanted to go to Yuma City, where he had another son, who had struck it rich and urged not only him to come, but his brother William and his family as well.

The old man was nearly eighty, but as straight and active as some men of forty.

One fine day, when things had been going rather bad for a long time, he gained the consent of his son and the rest of his family to go to Yuma with him.

As they had little money between them the old man proposed that they build a flat-bottomed boat and go there by the river that wound its way clear to the California gulf.

They talked over this scheme for some time, and finally decided that it was a good one.

They would certainly be a long while in reaching Yuma, but they could hunt and fish as they went along, and after stocking up with a supply of flour and meal, it would not cost them one cent to live on the way.

They took two horses and a wagon with them, so in case anything happened to the boat they would not be left in the wilderness without means of conveyance.

They also took a cow along for the milk she gave, and this made the living more pleasant.

Part of the loghouse that was built on the deck was reserved as a stable for the animals, and the other was divided into living and sleeping apartments.

It was very plainly but comfortably furnished, and outside of the monotony of the tedious journey they had nothing to complain of.

The young man of the trio was named William, after his father, but they all called him Bill, for short.

His sisters were called Agnes and Pearl respectively, and were aged about fifteen and seventeen.

They were very pretty girls, too, and as they had been brought up in the West they were quite used to it, and longed to see some great city.

They had read the letters from their uncle and aunt, and had come to the conclusion that Yuma must be a pretty big place—anyhow, much bigger and greater than the little mining town that they had left.

It was getting toward sunset, so Grandpop Salter, who styled himself the captain of the boat, gave it out that they would make a landing and take the horses and cow ashore to give them a chance at the green grass, while supper was cooked and eaten.

After he had peered carefully through the loopholes on either side—a proceeding he never neglected to do—William told his son to slide back the door.

The young man promptly did so, and then they went out on deck with the ropes they were to make the boat fast to the bank with.

In a few minutes the old man, who sat on a high stool, looking through a loophole in the bow of the boat and handling the tiller, sighted a good piece of land, and the next moment the boat was nearing the shore.

He must have been a pretty good judge, for he brought it to the bank with scarcely a jar, and then it was that the father and son sprang ashore and made fast to the trees that grew on the bank.

They had now covered nearly one half the distance to Yuma, counting the miles that were wasted in the many turns of the river.

And thus far they had seen but few people, and had been molested by none.

"This are what I call a pretty wild place, dad," remarked Bill, as he looked at the towering mountains on either side of the river and then at the snow-capped peaks and yawning gulfs that could be seen so plentifully.

"Yes, my boy," answered the father. "I reckon this are what they call ther Grand Canyon. I never was here, but I reckon your grandpop has been. We'll ask him in a minute."

Pretty soon the old man came out on deck, followed by Mrs. Salter and her two daughters.

"What do yer call this place, pop?" asked William.

"This are what they call ther Grand Canyon. It looks about the same as it did when I was down here nigh on to twenty year ago. Then it were mighty dangerous to travel, as ther Apaches were as thick as fleas around here, an' some times a lot of 'em git on ther warpath fer awhile an' make things lively. Ther Apaches are a lot wuss nor ther Sioux when they git ther Old Boy in 'em."

"I hope we don't come in contact with any of them," spoke up Pearl, the youngest of the two girls.

"If we do we will have to fight them, that's all," said her sister Agnes. "We can both shoot, you know, and so can mother. That makes six of us, and as we have each a good rifle, we can give a good account of ourselves should any Indians attack us."

"What's the way to tell 'em?" asked William.

"But I guess there is no cause for alarm. Anyhow, we are always ready for it if anything does happen."

The men in the party now hauled the gang plank ashore, and then the horses and cow were led out.

They were tied where the rich grass grew in abundance, after which they got axes and proceeded to cut some fire-wood from a dead tree that had fallen near the water's edge.

While they were engaged in this work the cracking of rifles suddenly came to their ears.

Instantly the three ceased cutting and listened, while they looked at each other inquiringly.

"What's up, dad?" asked Bill.

"I dunno. What is it, pop?" and the father turned to his father.

"Somethin's wrong," was the reply. "I reckon we'd better git ther hosses an' cow aboard in a hurry. Then we might find out."

The firing continued right on, and becoming alarmed, they hastened to get the live stock aboard the boat.

Then they carried the wood they had cut to the boat and waited for the old man to give further orders.

"Well," said he, after a pause, "now, Bill, you're the youngest; you go over there an' climb that tree an' see if yer kin get sight of what's goin' on over there."

"All right," exclaimed the young man. "I'll get up that tree in no time. Just wateh me."

He sprang ashore, and being an athletic fellow, was soon going up the tree, which was a big pine.

Once he reached a lower limb it was easy enough.

Before he reached the top, however, he began coming down faster than he went up.

"Somethin's wrong, pop," observed William. "Bill wouldn't come down like that if there wasn't."

"Wait till he gits here," was the retort.

Bill dropped to the ground and hastened aboard the house boat with all possible speed.

"There's a hot fight goin' on about a quarter of a mile back of us," he said, excitedly. "Some of 'em are soldiers on horseback, an' they're gettin' ther worst of it an' coming right this way."

"Who's a-fightin' 'em?" demanded grandpop, almost fiercely. "Is it Injuns?"

"No," was the reply. "It's whites."

"Then ther Old Boy must be to pay in ther Grand Canyon. Boys, if ther soldiers are gittin' ther worst of ther fight, an' eome here, we've got ter help 'em."

"That's right!" cried the son and grandson in one voice.

"We must stick up for Uncle Sam every time."

"You bet!"

"Sartin we will!"

All three had their rifles ready in a jiffy, and remained standing on the deck of the house boat, waiting for the soldiers Bill had seen to appear.

The clatter of approaching hoofs now came to their

Hearing the sounds, the two girls came out with their rifles, while their mother stood in the doorway of the cabin.

The next minute five horsemen came into view.

Two of them were cavalrymen, and the others wore hunting suits.

They were no others than Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart and Davy Driggs, with all that was left of the eight cavalrymen.

The outlaws had centered their fire on the uniformed men, it seemed, and in the short fight had succeeded in killing them all but two.

Charlie and Jim Dart had been forced to flee or be captured.

They knew that Wild and the lieutenant were in the hands of the villains, but they thought they would be better off if they got away.

Then they might be able to do something to rescue the prisoners.

When they started to flee the outlaws did not follow them far.

That was lucky for the occupants of the house boat.

Our friends looked at the queer craft that was tied to the bank in amazement.

They had not thought of meeting any one, let alone six people of both sexes on the deck of a house boat.

"Hello, strangers!" called out Cheyenne Charlie, and he reined in his horse.

"Hello!" answered Grandpop Salter. "Are you in trouble?"

"I reckon we was jest now, anyhow. A gang of about fifty took us by surprise an' cleaned out six of us, an' then took two prisoners from us. It was a regular nest of outlaws that struck us."

"Are they follerin' you?"

"No, they didn't foller us—leastwise not very far." Charlie and Jim soon told them all that had happened.

The Salters were much surprised, and not a little annoyed.

They felt sure that they had run into danger.

"Ther sooner we git away from here ther better it will be fur us, I reckon," said the old man. "We'll git ther boat down ther river about a mile further an' find a kind of hidin' place fur it. Then we'll lend you fellers a hand in a try ter get ther lieutenant an' ther fellow you eall Young Wild West away from ther outlaw gang. I ain't ther one as will sneak off when a fellerman is in danger; an' my son ain't, either, an' neither is my grandson. We are true blue, ther whole kit an' boodle of us, even to ther woman an' ther gals."

Our friends were very glad to hear them talk this way.

But none of them wanted the family to run into the least bit of danger on their account.

"You take my advice and go right on down the river, and keep on going," said Jim Dart. "While we are very thankful to you for your offer, I know you could not help us a great deal. We can't get our friends away

from the outlaws by fighting them. That is a certainty. It must be done by strategy, if at all. We are going to do the best we can, and I guess we will come pretty near succeeding. Young Wild West has been in just as tight places before, and what he can't do toward defeating such a gang as this one no one can. Just set your boat in motion and get on down the river before some of the outlaws come along and see it."

The old man said no more, and two minutes later the boat was untied and being pushed out in the stream.

As soon as they saw it headed down the river Charlie, Jim and Davy Driggs and the two cavalrymen rode along the bank in the same direction.

All five of them were worried over the capture of Wild and the lieutenant, but they were so surprised at meeting the Salter family and the house boat that their brains were in a decidedly muddled state just then.

CHAPTER IV.

A SHORT RESPITE.

Young Wild West began to think that perhaps his time had really come when he was dragged back to the further end of the cave.

But his coolness still clung to him.

"Do your worst, you fiends!" he cried. "Don't for an instant think that I am afraid to die."

"We will see about that," retorted the masked captain of the outlaws. "If you don't show that you are afraid to die you will be one out of ten thousand. Get a rope through that ring up there, some of you."

One of the villains quickly moved a barrel over, and then, rope in hand, he got upon it.

He quickly ran the end of the rope through a ring that was attached to a beam above that had evidently been placed there for a prop.

This done, he made a noose and stood waiting for further orders.

"Take that noose out of the rope!" commanded Captain Cack. "Then put it around the boy's body just beneath his arms. You can't get a noose there without untying his hands, and there is no need of doing that."

"I thought you wuz goin' ter put ther noose around his neck, cap," said the man, apologetically.

"No. I am going to do just what I told him I would do—smother him to death in boiling sulphur."

Lieutenant Snyder, who had been led there, looked at the preparations that were being made with a horrified expression upon his face.

He was gradually losing his nerve, and when he saw the rope placed about our hero's body and drawn tight he could stand it no longer.

"Don't!" he cried. "Don't send Young Wild West to his death. He is not deserving of it."

"That is just where you and I differ," answered the captain, with a sneer. "He came here to help drive us out of the Grand Canyon, and now we've got him we'll send him to eternity!"

"If you harm a hair of his head you will suffer for it tenfold!"

"I will take the chances on that."

"The government will send a force large enough to wipe you and your band out in no time."

"They will, eh? Well, they haven't been able to wipe any of us out yet. To-day is the first we have lost any men, and I guess this boy here is entitled to the credit, if you can call it credit."

"You had better let us go."

"Enough of this! Open the sulphur well, boys!"

Two of the outlaws stepped up, and with a sharp pointed iron pried open a slab of stone within three feet of where Young Wild West was standing.

A strange bubbling sound came to the ears of Wild.

Then the odor of sulphur came to his nostrils.

"Can you smell it?" asked the outlaw captain, with a laugh. "Well, let me tell you that it is boiling. It is so hot that it will scald you to death inside of five minutes, and all the while you are being scalded you will be strangled by the fumes of sulphur. Young Wild West, that is the way I fix those who come to hunt me down! I am going to be a little slow about killing you, and when you are gone I will make short work of the lieutenant here. I have changed my mind about letting him live, and will throw him in the sulphur spring, instead of lowering him in gradually, as I am going to do with you."

The lieutenant was a pretty nervy man, but this was too much for him.

"Surely you don't mean what you say!" he exclaimed.

"Don't I? Wait and see. I am Captain Cack, and I always keep my word. You are simply my mortal enemies, and you would have me hanged or placed in prison if you could. Why shouldn't I put you out of the way?"

Lieutenant Snyder made no answer.

At this juncture one of the members of the band, who had remained outside spying upon the movements of those who had escaped, came hurriedly in.

"Captain," said he, "two of ther soldiers an' three fellers with huntin' rigs on got erway. They rode up ther bank of ther river, an' I followed along to see what they would do. They met some people up there on a flatboat that's got a log cabin built on it. They was three men, a woman and two very putty gals."

"What?" cried the outlaw chief, looking at the man in amazement.

"That's right, captain. Every word that I said is that truth."

The leader of the band thought a moment, and then turning to the men who had taken the stone cover off the well that contained the boiling sulphur, said:

"Cover that over. I must see for myself. A flatboat with a log cabin built on it, eh? And a woman and two

good looking gals! Well, if that is true I must pay them a visit. Young Wild West and the chicken-hearted lieutenant can wait awhile. It will give them a chance to think over what is in store for them and let them make their piece with their Maker, if they are inclined to be religious. Two good looking girls, eh? Well, I haven't seen anything of the kind so long that it will do my eyes good. How old are they, about?"

"Sixteen or seventeen, I should say, captain," replied his informant.

"Ah! That is all right. I am a young man myself, and I daresay some people would call me handsome with my mask off. I must pay these people on the house boat a visit."

"They are tied to ther bank about half a mile above here."

"Well, I will start out at once. Get my horse out, some one."

Wild and the lieutenant felt much relieved.

A respite had been granted them, anyway.

Neither of them said a word as the hole was covered, and when the rope was taken off our hero, and he was led over to a corner he made up his mind that he had a good chance to live yet.

He was not a little surprised to hear that there was a house boat on the river, and he was very much gratified to hear that Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart and the cowboy had escaped with their lives.

While he deplored the fact that all the soldiers had gone under but two, but naturally rejoiced over the news that his two partners were safe.

He watched the outlaw captain as he walked back to the place where the horses were, and a minute later he heard the sounds made by hoofs as a horse walked over the stone floor in the adjoining cave.

"There must be another way to get out," he thought. "I am positive that we were not brought in past any horses. Well, if I get a chance I am going to go out the way the captain is going now."

He was just as cool as though he was merely in the cave on an expedition of sightseeing.

But with the lieutenant it was different.

He had little or no hope of ever getting out of the den alive.

"Brace up," said Wild to him. "Never say die until you know the last breath is leaving you."

"I wish I could look at it in the same light as you do, Wild," was the reply.

"You have been in as tight places as this before, haven't you?"

"No; I can't say that I have. I never thought that there were such fiendish men as these seem to be. At first I thought the outlaw chief did not mean what he said. But I became satisfied that he did when he placed that rope about you and had the stone cover removed from that boiling spring of sulphur water. Oh! What a horrible death it would be!"

"It certainly would; but I don't intend that it shall be our lot."

"What do you intend to do?" and just a faint ray of hope shot from the lieutenant's eyes.

"I haven't made up my mind yet."

There were no men right near them, and they could easily carry on this conversation in low tones without being heard.

It did the lieutenant good to talk, for the whiteness gradually left his face.

"If we could get our hands free we would have no chance to get out of here," he said. "There are too many of them in the cave, and besides we would not know which way to run."

"I will take the chances of getting out if I once get my hands free," replied our hero. "You can't slip your bonds, can you?"

"No; my wrists are tied so tightly that the rope is cutting into the flesh."

"Well, I am in the same fix."

"I can't see what you base your hopes on," and again the lieutenant became dejected.

"I don't exactly know myself, but that is my way."

The minutes flitted by and soon half an hour had passed.

The members of the outlaw band were gathered around in all sorts of positions.

Some played cards and smoked at the tables, and others lolled about lazily as though they did not have a care in the world.

But the captives could see that there were at least half a dozen of them who were keeping a close watch on them.

Young Wild West puzzled his brain to the utmost, but he could see no possible way of their getting out of the scrape without the assistance of some one.

He placed a great deal of confidence in his partners; but he knew they would have a hard thing to do if they got where he was to render him assistance.

The situation was about the same for the next few minutes.

It was just about this time that Captain Cack came back.

He had his mask on when he entered the cave, and seemed to be very well pleased with something.

"I want ten men to go with me," he said, looking around. "I am going up the river to get the two young ladies who are on the house boat."

The outlaws nodded in a matter-of-fact way.

"While you are getting ready, boys, I guess we will finish Young Wild West and the lieutenant," resumed the masked villain. "Get things ready, and be quick about it!"

The next minute Wild and his companion were seized and taken over to the hot sulphur spring.

It looked as though their last chance had gone.

CHAPTER V.

CHEYENNE CHARLIE FINDS OUT SOMETHING.

Cheyenne Charlie, Jim Dart and Davy Driggs and the two cavalrymen had not ridden far up the river before one of the latter was struck with an idea.

"Don't you think it would be a good plan for us two to ride on and try and find the cavalry that is located somewhere around here?" he asked.

"Jest ther thing!" exclaimed Charlie. "You kin go right ahead an' fetch enough of the boys back with you to wipe out these outlaws. Me an' Jim an' Davy will try to locate where Wild an' ther lieutenant are while you're goin', an' if you can't find us when you come back you can make up your mind that ther measly coyotes have got us, too."

"All right."

"Had the two of us better go?" asked the other soldier.

"Yes, you'd better both go."

"Well, we will go right away, then. I think we won't have to go many miles before we strike the boys."

"Good enough!" cried Davy Driggs. "I hope they ain't killed Young Wild West and the lieutenant, ther black-hearted varmints!"

After a few words more the two cavalrymen rode off in their quest for help.

The house boat was drifting on down the river, and when they saw it would soon be out of sight our friends came to the conclusion that they had better try and locate the place where the outlaws were keeping Wild and the lieutenant prisoners.

"It mought be that they've killed 'em," said the cowboy, shaking his head uneasily.

"No!" exclaimed Cheyenne Charlie. "If they'd been goin' ter kill 'em they'd have done it right out an' out. They wouldn't have taken 'em prisoners."

"That's about the size of it," nodded Jim Dart. "Now, if we can find a good place to hide our horses I think we can find out something by going up among the rocks there," and he pointed at the cliffs and irregular shaped rocks and boulders above them.

"I reckon we kin soon find a place to leave ther horses," and the scout nodded in the direction of a little glen where the undergrowth and bushes were so thick that it seemed almost impenetrable.

"If we can get through there it will be a good place in that glen."

"Well, I guess we kin get through. Come on!"

They took a good look around to make sure that no one was watching their movements, and then they moved for the jungle-like place.

Cheyenne Charlie knew just how to get through a tangled maze.

He dismounted when they reached it, and then, leading his horse, he began picking his way through without much a breaking a limb.

The others followed him, and soon they were in the glen, where a stream of water trickled from the rock-above, and plenty of grass for the horses showed in an open space.

They had Wild's sorrel stallion and one of the horses of the slain cavalrymen with them, and all the animals were soon nibbling at the grass contentedly.

"I reckon this will do," said Charlie, nodding in a satisfied manner. "Now, Jim, we'll get up there where you spoke about."

"I guess we can climb right up from here," was the reply. "Here is a sort of natural path, it seems."

Sure enough, there was a way to climb upward from the glen, and without any further parley they started to do it.

It was rather tedious when they got up a ways, but they soon reached a ledge that ran along in the direction of the place where the outlaws had first fired upon them.

That was the point they wanted to get to, for they all had an idea that it was in the close vicinity of that place that they would find the hidden retreat of the outlaws.

They knew the spot where they had been attacked exactly, and in about five minutes they were upon a ledge that was almost directly over it.

There were the bodies of the soldiers, just as they had fallen.

They had scarcely looked around below them when they saw a horseman suddenly show up around a bend in the cliff below.

He was riding along in a careless manner, but when he came to the dead cavalrymen he halted and looked around apprehensively.

Then he dismounted and approached the grawsome objects as though he was fearful that they might return to life and pounce upon him.

"That feller is scared," observed Davy Driggs. "He might be a blamed sight more scared if them outlaws was to jump out at him right now. It's a wonder they don't."

"He's a stranger, I reckon," answered Charlie. "Well, there he goes. He's off to find somebody to tell what he's seen, I reckon."

"That is about the size of it," said Jim Dart. "Well, I am glad the outlaws let him alone. Because if they had attacked him I should have felt it my duty to help him."

As the horseman disappeared in the distance our three friends left the ledge and worked their way down a rough descent for about forty feet.

Then they reached a comparatively level spot, which was about thirty feet above the level of the trail that ran along the bank of the river.

Slanting, vine-covered bluffs were on either side of them.

It was rather a wild and weird looking spot here.

The rifts and jagged points of rock were many, and it required good judgment to walk around without falling into some pitfall.

CHEYENNE CHARLIE led the way along, and Jim Dart followed with the greatest of ease.

But with Davy Driggs it was different.

He was rather clumsy.

When Jim saw that he was liable to slip and disappear from sight at any moment he turned to Charlie, and said:

"I guess you had better go ahead, and Davy and I will try to work our way around from the side. Davy will tumble into one of these cracks the first thing we know, if he keeps on trying to cross this place."

"All right; you go around, then," answered the scout. "I've got an idea that I smell smoke, an' I want to see where it comes from."

"By jove, I believe I smell it, too!" exclaimed Jim Dart, in a whisper.

"Well, you go on back. I've got it located, I reckon."

Charlie kept on, and Jim and the cowboy began picking their way back.

The scout reached a rise that looked like a furrow an immense plow had turned over, and when he got over it he not only smelled smoke, but saw it.

Right ahead of him was a rift in what seemed to be a solid mass of rock.

It ran in the shape of a semi-circle, and from this, in one particular spot a thin column of smoke was rising.

"I reckon I've found something," muttered the scout. "Now I'll see if I can take a peep at anythin' that's worth seeing."

Dropping upon his stomach he kept close to the rift and leaned over.

Cheyenne Charlie was in luck.

From his position he could see a lot of men gathered in a cave below.

That he had found the retreat of the outlaws he did not doubt for an instant.

"Whew!" he muttered, under his breath. "I reckon I've found where ther measly coyotes are located. Now, I wonder where Young Wild West and the lieutenant are?"

By bending over the crevice he could see all over the cave.

Presently his eyes lighted upon two forms reclining in a corner.

It did not take him more than a second to tell that they were the ones he was looking for.

Charlie had a keen eye and a very good head.

He came to the conclusion, after a quick survey of the place, that there was a very small chance to liberate the prisoners and get them out of the cave.

From his position he could easily have shot any one who interfered with them; but to do them a good turn without the villains knowing it would be an impossibility.

"I reckon I'd better go an' tell Jim an' see what he think about it," he mused. "Yes! That's what I'll do."

No sooner decided upon than he started to carry it out.

He got up and went back to the furrow-like ridge and looked for his two companions.

They had just made their appearance around a jutting point of rock a hundred yards off.

Charlie at once threw up his hand and motioned for them to keep quiet.

Then he hastened to meet them as fast as the treacherous road would permit.

"What's the matter?" asked Jim, as he neared them.

"I've found where Wild and the lieutenant is," was the reply.

"You have?"

"Yes."

"Where are they?"

"In a cave that's right underneath that spot over there," and the scout pointed out the place.

"You must have seen 'em, by the way you talk," remarked Davy Driggs, looking at him in surprise.

"I did see 'em."

"What!" and Dart showed as much surprise as the cowboy.

"That's right. Kin you git over there, Davy?"

"I reckon I kin by goin' aroun' that ledge over there."

"Well, come on, then. We want to be easy about it, as we've got to walk right over the heads of a whole lot of men, an' if they should hear us there might be trouble for us."

The three now started back for the rift where Charlie had peered down and seen the interior of the outlaws' cave.

Davy Driggs was the last to get there.

Jim was already taking a look with Charlie.

The cowboy leaned over and got a good view of the interior of the cave.

It was very surprising to him.

"How do they git in an' out of there?" he asked, in a whisper.

"By jove!" exclaimed Jim. "That gives me an idea. We will try and answer that question, Davy."

"We'll look fer ther place where they get in an' out!" Charlie chimed in.

"If there's a guard there we might be able to put him to sleep," said the cowboy, significantly.

"I reckon so," nodded the scout.

Jim Dart took another look through the rift.

Then he came to the conclusion that there were two ways to get into the place.

He could not see into the place where the horses were kept, but he could see the passage that led to it.

This struck him as being one of the places that the outlaws used to get in and out.

As this was much nearer to the prisoners than the other opening, he concluded to search for this.

So he began making his way cautiously over the natural roof of the cave in the direction he had located the mouth of the passage.

The rock that formed the roof of the cave was probably

ten or twelve feet in thickness, so there was little danger of their being heard, so long as they were a little cautious.

Jim saw a huge boulder ahead.

It lay in the narrow end of a hollow and blocked the way.

But the boy soon saw that it could be climbed over, though.

He lost no time in doing it, and Charlie and Davy followed his example.

Then they looked down a descent of perhaps fifteen feet and saw a winding path that ran along a ledge, and then down a slope to the level of the river bank.

"There's ther way ter get in ther cave," whispered Cheyenne Charlie. "Now, you fellers stay right up here. I'm goin' down an' see if I kin get in. If I get in trouble I'll either yell or shoot off my revolver."

"All right," answered Jim Dart. "Be mighty careful now, or we will be worse off than before."

"Jest leave it to me; I've done such things before, I reckon," and the scout started down the slope without any further ado.

He reached the trail below, and then, keeping close to a wall of rock, ventured around a turn.

Just as he got around it he came in sight of a man seated in what appeared to be the mouth of a little cave, with a rifle across his lap.

It did not take Cheyenne Charlie more than a second to realize that the opening was simply the way to get into the outlaw's cave, and the man was the guard.

"I must nail that feller!" he muttered under his breath. "He has got to be silenced in order for me to have a show to git Wild an' ther lieutenant. It's got to be did."

Bringing all his experience in woodcraft into play, Charlie began to creep toward the guard.

CHAPTER VI.

WILD AND THE LIEUTENANT ESCAPE.

Cheyenne Charlie knew that he had a dangerous task before him.

If he failed to silence the outlaw the alarm would be given, and then the chances were that both he and his friends would either be shot or captured before they could get away.

The scout did not want to kill the guard if he could help it.

The man was not looking his way at all.

On the contrary, he was taking things very easy—in fact, he was dozing.

Charlie had no idea how close he might be to others, but he had to take his chances.

Nearer and nearer he got to the guard, and presently he was close enough to spring upon him.

He got upon one foot and balanced his weight on his knee, and then—

His sinewy form shot forward!

Cheyenne Charlie did not make a miss of it.

He had calculated well, and while his right hand caught the throat of the outlaw in a vise-like grip his other seized him by the wrist to prevent the drawing of a pistol.

"Make ther least bit of noise an' you'll die!" whispered the scout with his mouth close to the ear of the villain.

The man was only human, as far as the thoughts of preserving his life went.

He ceased moving his feet, which had been scuffling on the ground, instantly.

"Come out here, an' walk mighty careful!" went on Charlie, as he pulled him out of the mouth of the passage.

The noise that had been made was not enough to cause any of those inside to become suspicious, and as the guard came with him readily, Charlie was elated.

Slowly, but surely, he forced the man back, and in less than a minute he was where Jim and Davy Driggs could see him.

And the moment they saw that the scout had made a capture they came down the slope to his assistance.

Then in a very short time they had bound and gagged the fellow.

"There!" exclaimed the scout. "I s'pose that's a great deal better than killin' ther measly coyote. He is what I call a very sensible man, for an outlaw. If he'd put up ther least fight when I jumped on him I'd have used my knife on him. Now, we'll find a place to poke him away fer awhile, an' we'll see what we kin do for ther prisoners."

"We'd better take him up and put him the other side of the boulder," said Jim. "He is bound to be safe there!"

"All right! Up he goes, then!"

The three could easily carry the man, and they lost no time in getting him up.

He was rolled over the boulder and allowed to drop on the other side as though he had been a sack of potatoes.

"I guess he's all right now if you fellows tied him good," observed the scout.

"He's tied all right," Jim answered. "Now, what is the next move, Charlie?"

Charlie looked keenly at Davy Driggs for a moment. Then he nodded approvingly, and said:

"Davy has got ter take ther place of ther guard while we try an' sneak in ther cave in some way. Davy is just about his size, anyway, and he has got whiskers like him. It's kinder dark in that passage, an' ther outlaws, if any of 'em happened to come out, wouldn't be apt ter notice ther difference."

"I'll do it!" exclaimed the cowboy.

"All right, then! Come on!"

Davy Driggs soon put on the black slouch hat, and then all three went down to the ledge below.

Cheyenne Charlie led the way into the passage, keeping close to the left wall in the shadows.

It was quite dark in the passage, and once in it the scout motioned for the cowboy to stay right there, and then started to creep back into it, followed by Jim.

As the two moved stealthily along they could hear the sound of voices close by.

Then the munching and stamping of the horses came to their ears.

The latter were the nearest to them.

That they realized instantly.

They had dropped upon their hands and knees and were moving forward cautiously.

Charlie felt certain that they were approaching the place where the outlaws kept their horses.

He was pleased at this, for they might have a chance to hide among the animals until they got an opportunity to do something.

In about three minutes they reached a turn in the passage and came in sight of at least seventy-five horses tied in a dimly-lighted place that was so large that it might be called a cavern, instead of a cave.

The horses were munching away at hay and grain, showing that the villains were good providers for them.

Lying flat upon the ground, our two friends took a good look around.

There was not a man in the stable, but through an opening off to their right the voices of many could be heard.

The only light in the stable had come through the opening, too, showing that the cave adjoining it was the one the scout had looked into from above.

Both Jim and Charlie were elated at their success so far.

The scout now led the way for the horses.

He knew that it was quite likely that one or more of the outlaws might come in the place where the horses were stabled at any moment.

He could hear the men laughing and talking inside in the usual fashion that a crowd of men generally has, and that made him understand that Wild and the lieutenant were in no immediate danger.

They had scarcely got among the horses when they heard a man walking that way.

Fortunately for them the animals did not show alarm, so they crouched out of sight.

The outlaw came into the stable with a pail in his hand, and our watching friends saw that he had come for water from the little stream that trickled through the corner of the cave.

It was like holding a pail under a faucet to be filled, and when the villain had all he wanted he went back.

Charlie and Jim felt easier, and they now began to look for some way to get a view of the place where the prisoners were.

Presently Jim noticed a crack in the rock through which came a streak of light.

He quickly called the attention of his companion to it.

"That's it!" exclaimed Charlie, in a low whisper. "That will give us a chance ter take a look at ther place, I'll bet!"

They crept over it, taking the risk of crawling under the bellies of the horses to do it.

And when they got there they were not disappointed.

Directly in front of the crack sat Young Wild West and Lieut. Harry Snyder.

Charlie, Jim and the cowboy had now consumed the best part of half an hour since they had seen the horseman pause and look at the bodies of the slain soldiers and then go on.

Wild and the lieutenant were talking in low tones, and as the two in the stable could catch the biggest part of their words, they could easily understand that Wild was trying to make his fellow prisoner keep up courage.

But Charlie and Jim could see more than the captives through the crack.

They could see conclusively that it would be nought but extreme foolhardiness for them to venture in there.

But they were not the sort to give up.

The situation might change, though just now they had no idea.

But they concluded to wait.

Both possessed plenty of the article known as patience.

One thing that bothered them, though, was that Davy Driggs might get tired of playing guard outside and come in to look for them.

If he did his clumsiness might be the means of their being discovered.

It was a case of being on "pins and needles," and the minutes passed slowly.

At length they both began to look for something to take place.

If it was their discovery it would be better than nothing, Jim Dart declared, in a whisper.

But they were not destined to wait much longer.

The first thing they knew they heard a horse coming through the passage.

And Davy Driggs was outside.

Charlie and Jim looked at each other and drew their revolvers.

They expected they would have to fight to the death now.

What was their surprise, then, when they saw the same man they had watched a little more than half an hour before as he rode along the river bank, enter the stable and dismount.

But that was not the end of it!

He took from his pocket a mask, and adjusting it so it covered his features, left his horse standing there and entered the main cave.

As he passed through the opening they heard him say the word "loyal" to the man, who must have been stationed on the other side of the second guard.

It struck them both that this was the password.

As Captain Cack—for it was certainly he—spoke in a loud tone, our two hiding friends heard everything he said about the house boat and the men he wanted to go with him to get the two girls who were on it.

When he told the men to get things ready to finish Young Wild West and the lieutenant Charlie and Jim realized that the climax was at hand.

Without the least hesitation, they moved for the entrance to the cave.

They got there just as Wild was dragged to the spring of boiling sulphur water.

The man on guard had his back to them, as he was deeply interested in the proceedings, and they got half way into the rendezvous of the outlaws without being seen.

"Put the rope about Young Wild West under his arms!" exclaimed Captain Cack. "Then lower him down and let him be boiled a little at a time. When he is finished throw the lieutenant in and close the hole. I want to see the misery of the young fellow who claims he has nerve enough to die!"

As the outlaw stepped forward to tie the rope around our hero at the captain's command a sharp report rang out, and with a shriek of mortal agony he pitched forward and fell into the hole.

The shot had been fired by Cheyenne Charlie, and it was but the forerunner of several.

Bent upon saving the two, they shot down all who were near them, rushing in as they fired.

Consternation seized the outlaws, and they fled in every direction.

Before any of them had fired an answering shot Young Wild West's faithful partners had seized both of the prisoners and hustled them into the cave where the horses were.

"Come on, boys!" yelled Cheyenne Charlie. "We've got ther outlaws in a trap. Shoot down every one that don't surrender!"

Two quick strokes of Jim's knife severed the bonds of Wild and the lieutenant, and they at once ran the way that was pointed out to them.

Then Charlie uttered such a yell that the horses got to prancing wildly about.

He was trying to make the outlaws believe that a troop of cavalry was coming, and succeeded admirably, for not one of them ventured to poke his head through the entrance.

Out in the mouth of the passage they met Davy Driggs in a very excited frame of mind.

"What's ther matter?" he asked.

"Go on and run!" answered Jim. "We haven't a second to lose!"

That was all the cowboy waited to hear.

He saw that Young Wild West and the lieutenant were with them, and that was enough.

Up to the place where the captive guard was lying went all five of them.

Charlie quickly cut the fellow loose.

Then they began yelling like mad to make the outlaws believe that there was a whole crowd of men there.

But they did not stop to make a fight of it.

Charlie had given Young Wild West one of his revolver, and waving it in his hand, the young deadshot exclaimed: "Thank you, boys! You were just in time!"

"Never mind that," answered Charlie, as he led the way over the dangerous path they had traveled to get there. "We don't stand any chance in a fair fight with that big gang of measly coyotes in ther cave. But at strategy I guess we're up to them."

"It was the best thing I ever saw done, Charlie!" Wild declared. "Why, they haven't as much as fired a shot yet, and I know that four of them went under when you and Jim rushed in. I thought it couldn't be possible that we had to die in that horrible fashion."

The face of Lieutenant Snyder was very pale, and all he was able to do just then was to nod his thanks to his rescuers.

So well did the scheme work that our friends got across the dangerous place that formed the natural roof of the cavern, and in a minute or two reached the glen where the horses were.

Once upon the back of his handsome sorrel stallion Young Wild West defied the world.

"Now let them come!" he cried. "If I only had my rifle I would like to wait here and pick them off."

"We'd better go on down the river an' give them people on ther house boat a lift," said Cheyenne Charlie.

"That's right! Come on."

They rode away without so much as a single shot being fired at them.

Very soon they came in sight of the house boat.

It was about a mile below the outlaws' cave, and as they looked at it they saw that it had become tangled with a big tree that had fallen into the river.

"They're havin' hard luck, boys," said Charlie. "Let's git there an' help 'em!"

"They will need help if Captain Cack keeps his word," retorted Wild. "He says that he is going to capture the two girls that are aboard."

"That's right," spoke up the lieutenant, who had now quite recovered himself. "I believe that fiend would do anything, and the men who are under him are as bad as he is."

"Well, our fight with the outlaws has started," averred our hero. "And you can bet it is going to be a fight to the finish!"

"Whoopie!" cried Cheyenne Charlie. "That's ther way ter talk! Hooray for Young Wild West!"

The others cheered just as though there was not such a thing as an outlaw within a hundred miles of them.

Those on the house boat heard them, and they waved their hands in delight when they saw our friends approaching.

As they rode up and halted on the bank they saw that

couple of axes would be required to get the tree out of the way of the boat, so Cheyenne Charlie at once started in to superintend the job.

The scout knew just what to do, and in less than fifteen minutes the top of the tree was hauled around and the craft was free to proceed on down the river.

As it started off our friends rode slowly along the bank, and then it was that William Salter told how the horsemen had overtaken them and asked the way to the camp of the cavalrymen.

While he was talking the clatter of hoofs suddenly came to their ears, and the next instant they saw the outlaw band riding toward them at full speed, their masked leader in advance urging them on.

CHAPTER VII.

OUR FRIENDS MEET THE TROOPERS.

"There's going to be a little fighting, boys!" said Young Wild West, smiling grimly. "Get to cover, and then give them fits!"

There happened to be a group of heavy oak trees right there, near which was a clump of rocks.

Our friends made a bolt for the trees, and just as they did so a volley was fired at them.

Fortunately for them, the shots were fired just an instant too late, and the bullets merely hit the trees and flattened against the rocks.

Those on the house boat immediately got inside and closed the door.

Then the muzzles of four rifles came through the loopholes.

It looked as though Captain Cack was going to get a very warm reception.

But the villain was enraged at the escape of the two prisoners he had been about to put an end to, and he was prepared to take any kind of a risk now.

If they got away the secret entrance to his headquarters would become known, and then it would only be the question of a short time before they were ousted.

Young Wild West and his friends were not taken by surprise this time.

They had had time to get to cover, and now they meant to give the outlaws all they were willing to take.

After firing the volley Captain Cack called a halt.

He knew it would be certain death for some of them if they advanced toward the clump of oaks.

He figured that he had sufficient men to eat up the little party, and he meant to slay every one of them.

But he was not going to risk too much, either.

Meanwhile Wild and his companions had dismounted and caused their horses to lie down.

They were upon their knees, their rifles ready to let the outlaws have it.

To the right of the place where they had dismounted was a long cliff, and on their left was the Colorado river.

As far as our hero could see there was only one way for the scoundrels to get at them, and that was for them to come straight ahead.

True, they might have a way to get around by mounting to the ridge above, but that would necessitate a journey of several miles.

If they meant to fight it out they would have to come forward openly and do it.

That was the way our hero figured it out, and he was right, too.

Captain Cack was exasperated, and he felt that unless he acted quickly the boy who had shown such great nerve would get away from him.

After a minute of deep reflection he gave the order to charge upon the clump of trees, behind which their foes awaited them.

"At them, men!" he cried. "The quicker we reach them the less there will be to go under on our side."

Our friends heard this cry, and they were ready.

The next instant the outlaws surged around the corner in double file, firing as they came.

Then it was that Wild gave the command to fire.

"Shoot to kill, boys!" he added. "It is to be a fight to the finish, remember!"

Crack! Crack! Crack!

The rifles spit out the death dealing bullets now.

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

Those on the house boat were making themselves heard, too.

It was a withering fire that Captain Cack and his gang were facing, and it meant nothing short of annihilation for them if they kept on.

When he saw fully half a dozen of his men fall in as many seconds he realized that it was time to retreat.

The villain seemed to bear a charmed life, for, though a man went down on either side of him, he remained unscathed.

"Retreat!" he shouted. "Make for cover!"

The men needed no second order.

They drew their horses around and fled like a lot of frightened sheep.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

The firing was kept up until they got around the turn in the cliff, three more of them dropping from the saddle.

Young Wild West led his comrades in a cheer.

Those on the house boat joined in.

It was a victory, and no mistake.

Over sixty desperate villains had failed to defeat them in a fight, and not one of them were so much as scratched by a bullet.

"Oh, if we only had the cavalry here!" cried Lieutenant Snyder. "We would make the gang fight or surrender!"

"We will get them!" answered our hero. "They won't leave. They think they have too good a retreat for that. Just wait awhile. The cavalry ought to be found inside

of a day or two, I guess. Then we will attack them and fight it out. They have probably given it up for the present, but they are so sore against us that they won't rest until the matter is settled, one way or the other."

"An' I reckon it'll be settled only one way," spoke up Cheyenne Charlie.

"That's right, Charlie! Only one way!" and Wild smiled grimly.

The rest knew what he meant.

The young Prince of the Saddle referred to the extermination of the outlaw band.

Glancing toward the river our hero saw that the house boat was making good headway down the stream.

"I guess we had better move, boys," he remarked. "We will follow the trail that runs along the river bank."

"Ther outlaws might foller," remarked Davy Driggs.

"I hardly think they will. We will run the chance, anyhow. They can't see our movements now, unless they go back and get upon the ridge."

Mounting, they rode off at a jog trot, keeping a look behind them as they went.

But it was as Young Wild West had said.

The outlaws did not choose to bother them again.

They kept along with the queer craft on the river until sunset.

Those on board were on deck most of the time, and quite a conversation was kept up.

Lieutenant Snyder became very much interested in Agnes, the elder of the two Salter girls.

The other daughter had been casting sheep's eyes at Wild, but he thought of his sweetheart home in Weston, and he never once let her know that he noticed her.

He talked considerably with her father, though, and learned where the family was bound.

"Do you think you will be able to get to Yuma in this way?" he asked him, as the sun was just sinking.

"Oh, yes!" was the reply. "We won't strike any more shallower water than we have, I reckon."

"But there may be a fall or two between here and your destination."

"I never thought of that," and William Salter scratched his head uneasily.

But grandpop came to his rescue by saying that there was nothing to hinder the house boat from going clean to Yuma, and as the old man seemed to know everything, his word went with his family.

None of our friends had ever taken a trip down the Colorado river to its mouth, so they could not say how it was.

Just as it was beginning to grow dark after the setting of the sun the clatter of hoofs was heard behind them.

As he was not sure but the outlaws might have found a way to get around and head them off, Young Wild West called a halt and ordered his men to be ready for an attack.

But the next instant a troop of cavalry came in sight,

and when Lieutenant Snyder saw them he took off his hat and gave a cheer.

All hands joined him in shouting, and then with a dash, the cavalry rode up and halted.

"It is Captain Knoll!" cried the lieutenant. "It is my company. It is too bad they couldn't have met us before the outlaws attacked us from ambush."

"That's so," said Jim Dart. "I reckon the scoundrels would have got more than they bargained for then."

As the troopers rode up they saw that the two who had rode off to find them were with them.

The cavalry numbered eighty-six men, including the officers, and they were a fine looking body.

The officer in command was Captain Knoll, and he greeted Lieutenant Snyder cordially.

The lieutenant quickly introduced Young Wild West and his partners, and the captain and other officers shook hands with them.

They looked at them rather curiously, and seemed surprised at the youthful appearance of our hero and Jim Dart.

"I received word from Fort Mohave nearly a month ago that you would probably come out here, Mr. West," said the captain. "With the message came a sealed envelope, which I was instructed to hand to you the moment I came in contact with you. Here it is!"

He pulled the envelope from his pocket as he spoke and tendered it to Wild.

It was not a very long communication, and stated that Young Wild West and his scouts would confer a favor on the authorities if he would hunt down the band of outlaws under the notorious Captain Cack.

It also stated that the pay for himself and his men would start from the time they set out for the Grand Canyon, and that Captain Knoll, of the Eleventh Cavalry, would give him all the information he knew in regard to the outlaws.

That was all there was to it, and when our hero had read it over carefully he looked at the captain, and said:

"Well, what information can you give us of the outlaws?"

"Not much, I'm sorry to say. I only know that they have been running things their own way in this section for the past six months. If we only knew where they were located we might be able to soon put an end to them."

"Well, we know just where they are located!"

"What?"

Captain Knoll looked at the boy in amazement.

"That is right, captain," spoke up the lieutenant. "Young Wild West and I have lately escaped from the band of villains. We were captured by them and imprisoned in their stronghold."

Captain Knoll was more astonished than ever.

Wild waited until Lieutenant Snyder had told all that had happened to the captain, and then he turned to him and said:

"I guess it will not be such a difficult job to clean out the outlaws. Suppose we go right at it now?"

"Certainly," was the reply. "It is getting dark, but if you will lead the way to the retreat we will soon attend to the villains."

"They will put up a hot fight, I think, and there are something like sixty of them."

"If they should ambush us it would be bad."

"That is so; but we will take a ride back there, anyway."

Wild now turned to those on the house boat.

"I advise you to keep right on down the river," he said. "By midnight you ought to reach the post where the militia is stationed. The moon will be up in an hour, and then you will be able to see your way."

"All right," answered Grandpop Salter. "You are only a youngster, but I reckon your advice is worth a good deal more than what I've heard some smart men give. We'll keep right on down the river until we reach ther post where ther soldiers are."

"You will get there before midnight, I think," spoke up the captain of the cavalry. "Keep in the channel where the current is strong, and you will make pretty fair headway."

It now being understood, Young Wild West turned his horse around and headed for the quarters of the outlaw band.

The captain and Lieutenant Snyder rode on either side of him, and Charlie, Jim and Davy fell in with the cavalrymen.

They all understood each other pretty well by this time, and there was not one of them who was not anxious to get at Captain Cack's band and put an end to them, either by killing them or capturing the villains, who had been the scourge of that portion of the Grand Canyon for so many months.

The distance to the place where they wanted to go was not more than fifteen miles, and they let the horses out a little.

Our friends had eaten nothing since noon, but they stayed their appetites by buckling their belts tighter about them, a proceeding quite common among men of their stamp.

They had covered probably a little over half the distance when a heavy explosion rang out, and the earth fairly trembled.

"That sounds as though ther outlaws had blowed up their cave," exclaimed Cheyenne Charlie. "It is just about that far off."

CHAPTER VIII.

CAPTAIN CACK MAKES SOME CHANGES.

Captain Cack was one of the most discomfited mortals that ever breathed when he was forced to retreat to save his band from being annihilated.

Desperate and daring to extremes, he knew he stood no chance with the little party behind the trees and rocks.

Young Wild West and his friends could shoot too straight for them to have a possible chance of reaching them.

True, he knew that they would not be apt to all go under before they reached them, but there would surely be only a remnant of the band left.

The coolness of Young Wild West had convinced him that the boy was more than ordinary in the line of fighting, and as he led his band back to the retreat he easily understood why it was that the officials of the government had sent so far to get the boy to help rout this band out of the Grand Canyon.

But the outlaw chief was one of the never-give-up kind.

He meant to stay right there and fight for what he called his rights to the very last.

"The first thing to be done now," he thought, as he rode into the cavern by the way of the stable "is to change the appearance of things around here. I'll have to figure awhile on it, though."

Once inside his snug quarters he gave the word for a double guard to be placed at both the entrances outside.

Then he called the men that were inside together, and said:

"Boys, we have met with a little bad luck, it seems; but that shouldn't discourage us. It would be queer, indeed, if we went along without encountering any difficulties. We have had things all our own way for quite a long time, and we have done a pretty good business, as you all know. Now I am going to show this Young Wild West that, as smart as he is, he does not know how to get the best of us. He knows the way to get in here by the stable way, but the other entrance is entirely unknown to him or his friends. By and by I am going to change the appearance of the land at the stable entrance. I am going to set off a keg of powder and blow some of the rocks and earth out of shape. I guess that will keep Young Wild West from leading the cavalry here."

A cheer went up from the men.

They thought their chief had a wonderful head on him.

"There is something else on my mind, boys," resumed Captain Cack. "You might have heard me say that I had set my heart on getting the two young girls on the house boat in my power. If I can do that I will be able to defy all the soldiers this side of the Mississippi."

"You kin git 'em, cap, if you only make up your mind," spoke up one of the band, showing by his manner that he had all the confidence in the world in his leader.

"Yes, I think I can get them, in spite of Young Wild West, or any one else. I have an idea just now how I can get them, too."

"Tell us, cap!" said the man who had spoken before.

"See here, Blake!" and Captain Cack turned his sharp eyes upon the speaker. "Have you got nerve enough to

lead twenty men around through the pass and head off that house boat and Young Wild West's gang?"

"I reckon I have, cap. Just say the word an' see if I ain't!"

The outlaw chief smiled through his mask.

He always had his face covered when he went out with his band, and he had not yet removed the mask.

The reason that he did this was that when he went out alone he posed as a different character entirely.

Sometimes he visited the headquarters of the cavalry, which was situated at a little settlement called Godfrey, about twenty miles distant.

There he was known as Charles Carr, a wealthy ranchman.

"I would go myself on this trip," said the villain, as he took the mask off and thrust it in his pocket, "but I will be needed here. Our hiding place must be preserved at all hazards. It would not do for the cavalry to come here, for, though we might hold them off for awhile, it would only be a question of a day or two before they would have enough men here to eat us. The thing to be done is to fix it so Young Wild West and the lieutenant cannot find the entrance. That is going to be a difficult task, but I will find the way to do it, as sure as my name is Captain Cack."

The fellow called Blake proposed three cheers for him at this, but the captain held up his hand.

"No cheering now, boys. We must wait for awhile. Blake, go ahead and pick your twenty men and start off at once."

Blake selected them in less than five minutes.

He took those who seemed to be the most willing to go, and as he was pretty well liked, it looked as though he would be chosen as the leader's lieutenant, since the man who had acted in that capacity had been killed in the charge a short time before.

Blake informed the captain that he was ready.

"All right," was the rejoinder. "Now, I want a man to go along with you, and in case Young Wild West and his friends are coming back this way, or are not with the house boat, I want him to ride back as fast as he can. Who has got the swiftest horse among you?"

"I have, cap'n," spoke up one of them. "Leastwise, my nag ain't never been beat."

"All right, then. You go along. If there is anything wrong you get back here and tell me. You will all go by way of the ridge. As you are aware, you can see the river from it in a great many places. When the moon gets up and you will be able to see a long distance, keep your eyes open. And, Blake!"

"Yes, sir."

"Don't forget to bring the two girls back with you."

"All right."

"Have you made all provisions for doing so?"

"Yes, sir. I've got a couple of blankets an' silk handkerchiefs to tie over their mouths. I've got a bottle of chloroform, too, in case it might be needed."

"Are you sure you know how to use chloroform?"

"Oh, I've used it afore, cap. It was ther time I helped rob ther bank down at Yuma."

"All right, then. I'll leave it to you. Off with you!"

The detachment rode out of the cave and headed for a deep ravine that was off to the rear of the cavern as soon as they reached the level below.

When they had gone Captain Cack began to conjure up a plan to change the geography of the place, as he termed it.

He went out through the stable and out upon the ledge that our friends had managed to find the place from.

The guard they had captured and thrown behind the boulder had told the outlaw chief just how they got away, so he thought he would go up there and have a look.

The moon was just rising, and as it emerged from behind a distant gray peak he got a pretty good view of the uneven waste of earth and rock.

The deep cuts and lofty heights looked weird enough in the pale light of the moon.

"Kegs of powder dropped into one of those crevices near where they got up from below will destroy the looks of the place entirely," he muttered. "Then another a little ways from the passage that leads through the stable into our den will fix things. We can use the main entrance to go in and out in the future, and I am certain that they could not find that in a dog's age. It is too well hidden for that. Well, I will see that the powder is exploded as soon as possible."

He soon picked out a place that suited him for the purpose he had in view, and then going back into the cave, he ordered two of the men to bring out the keg of powder and a fuse.

They had plenty of powder in the place, since a couple of months before they had made a raid on a supply train that was headed for Godfrey, down the river.

In less than half an hour the keg was placed where he wanted it and a long fuse attached to it.

Captain Cack took the responsibility of lighting it him self, and as soon as the match was applied he hastened from the spot, followed by his two assistants.

The explosion did not take place until they were back at the mouth of the passage, and then with a thunderous sound the powder went off.

It was wonderful to see the change that the explosion wrought.

The outlaw chief had planned the thing accurately, and the place where our friends descended from the glen was simply a perpendicular cliff now, the earth and dirt having broken away and tumbled into one of the rifts.

A goat could not have climbed up there now.

Captain Cack went back and surveyed the result with a smile of satisfaction.

"It was an awful report, men," he observed; "but the powder did the work. Now for the other place."

When they got back to the cave the horses were led from the stable, for the outlaw leader thought it

the whole thing might cave in when the second lot of powder went off.

Another keg of the explosive was brought out and planted in a rift right where the guard had been tossed behind the boulder by our friends. The fuse was attached and lighted, and then the outlaws got as far to the front of the cave as possible.

Boom!

As the thunderous report rang out there was a rattling of stones and dirt, and then the whole ledge gave away, the debris shooting down upon the trail below in the form of a small avalanche.

A portion of the roof over the stable came in with a crash, effectually blocking the entrance from that direction.

The horses pranced about with alarm, and the wicked men shrank close to the front wall of the cave in fear.

There was something awful about the reverberating report, and it filled their hearts with dread.

A deathly silence prevailed after the last echo died away and then it was that Captain Cack spoke.

"Well done!" he exclaimed. "Men, I have an idea that just what I wanted to bring about has happened. We will see."

The lighted lanterns in the cave had become extinguished by the terrible shock, and striking a match, he soon had one lighted.

As soon as he saw that everything was all right in the main cave he gave a nod of satisfaction.

This assured the men more than the fact that they saw everything was all right in the cave.

They had learned to depend upon their captain in any kind of an emergency, and when they saw the smile of triumph that illumined his features they knew that everything was all right.

He at once went about looking into things, and when he found that there was no mistake in his calculations he gave the word for all the lanterns to be lighted.

When this was done the cave was illumined as before. The horses calmed down, and all was comparatively quiet.

"Now let the cavalry come if they want to," observed the captain, with a grim smile. "I don't care if half a dozen Young Wild Wests come along with them, either, for none of them will be able to find this place. But, boys, we have got to remain comparatively quiet, for it is possible that they may get near enough to hear us, and then they make take it in their heads to use powder to blow their way here, the same as we used it to keep them out!"

A hoarse murmur of approval went up from the men at this.

Then they gradually got down to their usual routine.

Captain Cack took a stroll around, and finally went out through the main entrance to the cave.

This led into a passage that was barely wide enough for two horsemen to ride abreast, and was crooked and dark.

The mouth of it was in a vine covered cliff, and was covered by a big piece of canvas that was painted in exact imitation of the gray rock.

This, with a few straggling vines that hung down over it, made it look like the cliff itself, and only by the merest accident would it be discovered.

Out from the mouth of this hidden passage the ground was covered with a fine white sand, and as the outlaws came and went one of them who remained behind, invariably went over the ground with a big bellows and obliterated the tracks.

This was quite an easy thing to do, since the sand was not more than an inch or two in depth and was sprinkled over a surface of rock.

No wonder, then, that Captain Cack felt sure that the retreat would not be discovered from that direction.

That the effects of the explosion would completely baffle his enemies he did not doubt.

He found two of the outlaws on guard when he went out, and when they told him that everything was quiet he went back again and threw himself on his bunk to get some sleep.

It was just before daylight in the morning that he was awakened by one of the men, who reported that Blake and his band of twenty had got back, and that they had the two girls they had been sent after.

The outlaw chief was elated.

But suddenly he thought of the man who had gone with them for the purpose of riding back in advance of the party and reporting.

He had failed to show up!

CHAPTER IX.

THE SEARCH FOR THE OUTLAWS' CAVE

Young Wild West agreed with Cheyenne Charlie when he said the explosion sounded as though the outlaws had blown up their cave.

It did sound as though it was about where the cave was.

"It may be that they have blown up the cave and left the vicinity," our hero said. "But we will ride on and take a look."

As they rapidly neared the vicinity another explosion rang out.

They now became satisfied that the villains were using powder for some reason.

And it looked as though they were destroying their retreat before they left the vicinity.

Young Wild West urged the cavalry forward to a faster gait.

He was in hopes of catching up to them before they got away.

On thundered the noble horses with the brave lot of

fighters, and in a few minutes they had reached the spot where the fight had taken place that day.

The moon was now pretty well up in the heavens, and it was light enough for them to see a considerable distance.

Wild and his partners kept looking for the place where they had come down from the rocks into the glen as they rounded the cliff where they had forced the outlaws that afternoon.

Cheyenne Charlie had the glen deeply impressed on his mind, and he was satisfied that he would know the place to a certainty.

He did not find the way into the glen quite easily, but when they got there he became instantly convinced of his mistake.

"I'd make an affidavit that this was the place," he declared. "But it ain't, though."

"There are many places that look alike here in the mountains," retorted Lieutenant Snyder.

"We certainly did not come down from there by that way," and Jim Dart pointed at the perpendicular walls and shook his head.

As the outlaws had taken care of the bodies of those who had fallen that day, there was nothing to show them just where the place was.

While the moon gave considerable light, it was not sufficiently strong enough for them to distinguish objects very freely.

"Let's make another try," said Wild.

They did so.

But they only succeeded in getting farther away from the place.

When Cheyenne Charlie became convinced that they had passed the hidden retreat he proposed that they go back and look for the mouth of the cave they had escaped from when Wild and the lieutenant were liberated.

"I have an idea that I can find that place, if I can't find the way we got there," the scout said. "I remember that I could see three trees, one of which was broken near the top, right below on the river bank. Now all we've got to do is to find them trees."

"I guess that won't be a hard thing to do," answered Wild. "Are you sure that they were right along on the trail near the bank of the river?"

"Sartin of it!" declared the scout.

"Then it hadn't ought to take us long to find them," spoke up Jim Dart.

"We've come past 'em, I reckon," observed Davy Driggs. "I've a notion that them very trees are about half a mile back."

After consulting with the captain of the cavalry they turned and rode slowly back.

Cheyenne Charlie was very positive about the trees, and he kept a sharp watch as they rode along.

They had covered a trifle over half a mile on the back trail when he suddenly caught our hero by the arm, and exclaimed:

"There's ther trees! I know'd I'd find 'em. Ther mouth of ther passage that leads inter ther stable of ther outlaws is right up there, an' I'll bet my life on it."

He pointed above, and when the rest looked they saw nothing but a mass of rocks, that towered in the air up a steep that even a mountain goat could not climb.

"You are wrong, I guess, Charlie," said Lieutenant Snyder. "There is nothing up there that looks like the place."

The scout scratched his head.

"I don't know what to make of it," he admitted, after a rather lengthy pause.

"Well, there is only one thing to do, and that is to keep on searching," observed Young Wild West. "If we find no signs of the hiding place in an hour's time I would suggest that we go into camp somewhere and wait till daylight."

This sounded like good advice to all hands, so they once more began the search.

They divided into two parts, Wild leading one and Cheyenne Charlie the other.

Though they made a careful search about the vicinity at the expiration of an hour they met and acknowledged that they were baffled.

The scout still stuck to it, and the place where they had entered the outlaws' cave and rescued Wild and the lieutenant was directly above and in a line with the trees.

"We'll camp here till daylight, then," he said. "When ther sun gits up I reckon things will look different."

Wild agreed with Charlie on this point, so at his suggestion the captain ordered the cavalry to go into camp.

It was right near the bank of the Colorado that they built a fire.

None of them had eaten supper, and they were anxious to get at it.

In a little while the aroma of boiling coffee and broiling meat filled the air.

Pickets were stationed well out from the camp to make sure that the outlaws could not sneak upon them under cover of the rocks and surprise them with a storm of bullets.

Supper over, they felt better, and when the pipes were lighted they were a very contented lot, for the most part.

Young Wild West was one of those who was not contented.

He felt a little put out because they had failed to locate the spot where the outlaws had their headquarters.

But he figured that they would be apt to find it when daylight arrived.

But Wild did not let this keep him from sleeping.

There were times when he could not get his night's rest, and it was bad enough to go without it then.

Now he had an opportunity to sleep, and when he lay down upon his blanket he was not long in dropping off into a slumber.

It was a little after daylight when he awoke.

The sun was just gilding the mountain tops with a golden glow.

den sheen, and the twittering of the birds that infested the bushes and trees along the banks of the river made our hero think of activity.

"Now to find the outlaws," he thought, and he turned his gaze to the point where Cheyenne Charlie was so certain the mouth of the passage was.

As he looked up he saw that the scout was ahead of him.

And so was Jim Dart.

The two were trying to climb to the top of the cliff that was right opposite the three trees.

Our hero walked over and was soon beneath them.

Charlie motioned him to keep quiet.

"They have found out something," he mused. "I guess I'll get up there, too."

But he soon saw that it was not likely that it could be done.

He looked around and finally noticed that there was a chance to climb the cliff a hundred yards below.

He caught the eye of Jim and then pointed that way. The boy at once understood.

He was always eager to act upon the advice of Young Wild West, and so was Charlie.

As soon as they told the scout they both started down.

"You couldn't get up there that way in a week," said Wild. "It's simply wasting time."

"I sorter reckoned that way myself," answered Charlie. "But you see we heard something up there that makes us satisfied that ther gang is there yet."

"What did you hear?"

"Horses."

"Horses?"

"Yes, we could hear 'em stamping on the ground, couldn't we, Jim?"

"Yes, we surely could," replied Jim. "The outlaws are up there, I feel certain."

"Well, if they are I can easily understand what the two explosions meant last night," exclaimed our hero.

"What?" questioned Charlie.

"The scoundrels must have blown up a lot of rocks and earth just to change the looks of things, and, at the same time, to fix it so we could get to the place that would give us an entrance to their cave."

"By jove!"

"Great catamounts!"

Wild's partners slapped him on the back simultaneously.

Neither of them had dreamed of such an explanation of the explosions.

Now it seemed as plain as day.

Wild had figured on something of the kind the night before, but he had resolved to wait till daylight to express an opinion.

Now, that his partners had declared that they had heard noise below them, he was satisfied that he was right.

The three now started for the point Wild had indicated.

"You had better get a lariat, Jim," the scout remarked.

"Well, we might have to let ourelves down a bit.

It strikes me that if we git upon ther ledge an' follow it along a bit we'll be somewhat higher than ther p'int we want ter git to."

"All right. I'll soon get a lariat," and Jim hastened for the camp.

When he arrived there he told Lieutenant Snyder what they intended to do, and asked him to keep a watch on the ledge.

"If they come out and attack us you will have a chance to plug them," he said.

"All right," was the reply. "I will notify the captain right away, and he will have his men ready."

Jim hurried over to where Wild and Charlie were waiting for him.

Then all three hastened for the point our hero had picked out.

Young Wild West had made no mistake.

When they got there he saw that they would be able to climb up with comparative ease.

"Up we go, boys!" he cried. "Keep your eyes open, for it may be that every move we make is watched by the outlaws."

They started up the rugged ascent.

In five minutes they had reached the top.

A single glance showed them that they would be able to make their way to a place that was directly over a ledge that was about on a level with where they were certain the mouth of the passage leading into the mouth of the stable of the outlaws' den was the day before.

There was a bend in the ridge, and they could see that beneath a sharp overhang there was a ledge that extended into a cave-like opening.

"Mark that spot well in your mind, boys," said Wild. "That is where we want to get if we want to learn anything."

"I've got it!" exclaimed Charlie. "I can't miss it!"

"Nor I, either!" declared Jim.

They looked down and saw that the cavalrymen and Davy Driggs were watching their movements, and then they started along the high ridge.

They were nearly a hundred feet above the level of the river now, and the water sparkled in the sun as though it was interspersed with threads of gold and silver.

Picking their way carefully along, they soon reached the part of the cliff that overhung the ledge.

There was a convenient tree to tie the lariat to, and when he had dropped on his stomach and peered over and found that the lariat would more than reach to the ledge below, Wild told Charlie to make it fast.

The scout did so.

"Now," said Wild, "I will go down first."

"And I will come next," spoke up Jim.

"All right. But we all want to be as silent as we can, you know."

"Oh, yes."

They were talking in low whispers, for if any of the outlaws were about they did not want them to hear them.

Our hero caught hold of the lariat and swung off the edge of the cliff.

Then he went down boldly for the ledge.

His feet soon rested on the rock, and then he turned and let go of the lariat.

The next instant a burly man threw himself upon him and tried to force him from the ledge, but, though he was taken by surprise, the boy put up a desperate fight.

It was a fierce struggle on the ledge, with but one chance in a thousand to win.

But Wild never lost courage. As he forced the villain back he heard the voice of Jim Dart exclaim:

"I am here, Wild!"

CHAPTER X.

WILD AND THE OUTLAW CHIEF.

As the returning outlaws under the lead of Blake filed into the cave, leading their horses, Captain Cack put on his mask.

His quick eye lighted on the forms of the two girls, and as they were placed on a pile of skins in one corner he stepped over to them.

"They ain't quite themselves yet, cap," said Blake. "I had ter use ther chloroform on 'em."

"Good! I hope you didn't use too much, though," was the reply.

"Oh, I reckon I didn't do that, cap. They're a good ways from bein' dead. They know about everything that's goin' on now. It's ther effects of ther stuff what's makin' them sick now. They'll be all right as soon as they've had a strong cup of coffee apiece and a little sleep."

"I am glad to hear that. I will just make them comfortable, then, while some one gets the coffee ready."

"We had quite a time gittin' 'em, cap!"

"You did, eh?"

"Yes."

"How did you manage it?"

"Well, we was helped a whole lot."

"Helped a whole lot?" and the outlaw chief showed great surprise.

"Yes. There were some rocks in the river that helped us."

"How is that?"

"Well, ther blamed old house boat run agin' some sharp rocks just afore we got there. It was sinkin' an' them what was on it was gettin' their things ashore as fast as they could. Ther wimmen were landed first, an' then while ther men went back ter git some of their belongings, we simply grabbed ther two gals an' made off!"

"Then you didn't have much of a time after all."

"I don't know about that, cap. They fired at us pretty hot an' we lost one man."

"Lost a man, eh? Why, I thought all hands came back?"

"They did—ther ones I picked out ter go with me; but ther feller you sent along ter ride back ahead of us got it just as we started. One of ther men on ther sinkin' house boat dropped him stone dead from his horse."

"Ah!"

"It is too bad, but it can't be helped. Two of my men got slight wounds. They're over there havin' 'em fixed up now."

He pointed to where a couple of the outlaws were being bandaged by some of their companions.

"I am glad you met with such good luck, Blake. In return for your excellēnt service I will appoint you my lieutenant, to take effect immediately."

"Thank you, cap."

"Don't mention it. Now, just see that the young ladies get the strong coffee you spoke of."

A few minutes later the coffee was brought.

The sisters were really sick, and this took away some of their fright.

When they were told that the coffee would surely make them feel better they drank it.

The effect was as Blake said it would be.

They both dropped off to sleep.

Captain Cack was greatly pleased.

He felt that his turn was coming again, and that he was destined to rule the Grand Canyon for a long time yet.

It was while such thoughts were running through his head that one of the men came running up to him rather excitedly.

"There's been a cave-in back of the stable, cap!" cried the man, excitedly.

"Well, there's nothing wonderful about that," was the reply. "That is from the effects of the blow-up last night."

"Yes, cap; but there's a way to get out on the ledge now."

Captain Cack was all attention now.

He followed the man back into the stable and saw that a fresh lot of dirt had tumbled into the place, and that there was quite a good-sized opening there.

Just then one of the outlaws stepped out of the opening, shaking the sand and dust from himself.

"Hello, cap'n!" he exclaimed. "You can git an excellēnt view out here now."

"You can, eh? Well, I guess I'll take a look."

"You'd better, for there's a troop of cavalry camped on ther river bank."

"The dickens you say! After us, I suppose. Well, they will have a time of it, I guess."

Out through the short passage that had been so quickly formed the villain went, followed by Blake and one of the other men.

It opened into a small cave that was a couple of feet below the level of the ledge.

The three outlaws were soon at the mouth of this. They could see the camp of the cavalry on the bank of the river directly opposite.

And Captain Cack took note of the fact that the ledge was being watched by them.

They took good care not to show themselves, but kept down low.

The three had not been there more than a minute when they were surprised to see a rope drop down from above.

Captain Cack gave a nod.

"They are after us!" he exclaimed, in a whisper. "Whoever comes down here must die."

His companions gave a nod.

They were not kept long in suspense.

A pair of feet suddenly showed, and then the outlaw captain pushed Blake forward, with the words:

"Send him on down the sharp rocks below, and then get right back here."

Blake waited till the feet of the person struck the ledge, and then started to do the captain's bidding.

But it was Young Wild West that he had to deal with, and when he realized it some of his nerve left him.

He failed to push him off the ledge, and then a struggle began.

When Captain Cack saw the daring boy forcing his lieutenant toward the mouth of the little cave he resolved to capture him.

He paid no attention to Jim Dart, who was descending upon the lariat, but reaching out, caught Blake and pulled him down into the cave with a jerk.

The action was so unexpected that Wild came with him.

Before our hero could recover himself he was seized by the captain and thrown to the ground.

Realizing what was required of him, the other villain flung himself upon and held him powerless.

"Into the cave with him!" whispered the outlaw chief.

As quick as a flash Young Wild West was whisked through the short passage and out of sight of Jim Dart, who now stood on the ledge with a revolver in either hand.

For the second time our hero was a captive in the hands of the outlaws of the Grand Canyon.

But never once did he lose his nerve.

His quick brain told him that he was not going to be killed.

If they had wanted to kill him they could easily have shot or stabbed him on the ledge.

It occurred to him that they intended to hold him a prisoner in order to make some sort of a deal with the cavalry, for that the villains knew the cavalry was encamped below he felt certain.

There was no use in struggling against the three of them.

They had him at a disadvantage, and that was all there was to it.

He was dragged through the passage into the stable, and

"Half a dozen of you guard the hole!" the captain exclaimed. "Shoot down all who attempt to come through it!"

The men flew to obey his command.

"Ha!" cried Captain Cack, when Wild had been tied so he could not move his hands; "so we meet again, Young Wild West."

"So it seems," was the cool retort. "I see that you have got your mask off this time, too."

"Oh, I don't know that I am afraid to let you see my face."

"You shouldn't be—not when you have got me tied."

"I shouldn't be at any other time."

"That means that you would be willing to fight it out with me."

"I assure you that it would give me much pleasure to fight a duel with you if it were not for one thing."

"And what is that, pray?"

Our hero was talking as calmly as though he was merely on a friendly visit.

"I have other use for you."

"Oh!"

"Yes. If you expect to get out of here alive you must arrange it so the troopers outside go away and leave this place unmolested."

"And what then?"

"You shall be spared death."

"I will be allowed to go free?"

"You shall be spared death!"

"That answer is too vague. I might be spared death, but you might do something to me that would be almost as bad as killing me. I am afraid I cannot entertain your proposition."

The brow of the outlaw chief darkened.

"If it is not arranged so the cavalry permit me and my men to depart from here without molestation you will die a horrible death, Young Wild West."

"See here, Captain Cack!" cried Wild, in a ringing tone. "You dare not kill me, and you know it. You know what would happen to you if you did. If you have a way of getting out of this cave without the cavalry seeing you you had better leave it at once. If you remain here you will simply be meeting death halfway. They are bound to have you, even if they have to blow the cave up and destroy you. Your chance is to get out here at once, and let me go out the way I was brought in."

Captain Cack acted as though he thought that was about the size of it, but he was not going to give in, just the same.

He was as desperate a villain as ever pulled a trigger, and he was willing to take his chances with death almost any time.

"Young Wild West," said he, putting on as impressive a tone as he could command, "if I am to die you are to go with me. You were brought here to hunt me and my gang out, and to know that you were to go with me would make the facing of certain death quite easy to me."

It is easy enough to die if you can only get it fixed in your mind that some one whom you hate has got to go with you!"

"You are quite a philosopher, even when death is staring you in the face," retorted Young Wild West, not the least bit abashed. "But this is no time for philosophy. When you come to think of it, it is better to live in prison the rest of your natural life than to be hanged in disgrace."

"I don't know whether it is or not. But a truce to this talk. Once more I will ask you if you will draw off the cavalry, so we may depart without being molested?"

Before our hero had time to answer there was a scream from a female, and the next instant Pearl Salter sprang to his side.

"Oh, Young Wild West, what are you doing here?" she cried.

Wild was astonished at her sudden appearance.

"Why—what are you doing here?" he gasped.

"I—I—hardly know," she answered. "I remember of being seized by a lot of men, and then I felt myself choking. My sister and I were brought here. Our boat was sinking, and we were on the shore with mother when the men seized us."

"It's too bad," answered Wild. "I am very sorry that you have fallen into the hands of these scoundrels. But just keep up your courage. You will be saved in a short time. The cavalry and my friends are outside."

"Enough!" cried Captain Cack, flying into a rage. "Go whence you came, girl! I would have you understand that I am master here. You are my slave. Do as I say; or you shall be flogged. One would think that you were the promised bride of the impudent boy with the long hair. Get back there by your sister, or I'll——"

The villain raised his hand as though to strike her.

The girl made a move as though she was going to obey, but it was but a bluff on her part.

As quick as a flash she grabbed the knife that was in his belt, and then with another quick stroke, severed the bonds that held our hero powerless to act.

Wild immediately took advantage of her daring act.

With a panther-like bound he sprang at the outlaw chief, and with a well directed blow sent him to the floor.

Before the astonished outlaws in the cave realized what had happened he seized the captain's revolvers.

"Now I guess that some one is going to die, and it is not going to be me!" he cried, in a ringing tone. "Hey, Charlie! Hey, Jim, look out for me! I'm coming out!"

At this moment Captain Cack sprang to his feet.

"You will never get out of here alive, Young Wild West!" he hissed.

"Hold up your hands, you miserable outlaw!"

The captain was looking straight into the muzzle of a shining revolver now.

Up went his hand.

CHAPTER XI

CAPTAIN CACK'S SLIDE FOR FREEDOM.

Jim Dart dropped upon the ledge and got his balance just as the three villains dragged Young Wild West from his view.

Jim was more than surprised at the sudden turn of affairs, but he did not lose his presence of mind.

He immediately took up his stand at the mouth of the opening and drew his revolvers.

He realized that if the men came out in a rush they would be apt to hurl him off the ledge.

Consequently, he must not let them get out.

He would shoot just as fast as they showed themselves.

Wild had been seized and carried away right before his eyes.

He waited for fully a minute after the disappearance of our hero, and then he ventured to turn and beckon to the cavalrymen.

They saw him, and when he pointed downward into the cave they very easily understood that something was wrong with Wild.

Cheyenne Charlie saw the cavalrymen hasten to get up where he was, and then he, too, knew something had happened to his partners.

"Hello!" he called out.

For an answer Jim gave two smart jerks on the lariat.

This was quite enough to make the scout come sliding down the rope, and when he landed on the ledge and saw Jim peering into the opening, his revolvers ready to shoot at an instant's notice, he was more than surprised.

But he was ready to fight the instant he landed, and shooter in hand, he hastened to Jim's side.

"What's the matter?" he asked, in a whisper.

"Wild's gone," was the reply.

"Where to?"

"In there."

"Did he fall in?"

"No; he was pulled in."

"Ther outlaws done it, then?"

"Yes. They were all ready for him, and the moment he stepped upon the ledge one of 'em pounced upon him."

"So they yanked him in there, did they?"

"Yes—three of them."

"An' they're waitin' for us to come and look for him. I reckon."

"Yes. Waiting to shoot us down the moment we start to go through the passage."

"What do you advise doin'?"

"Wait till Davy Driggs and some of the soldiers go here. Then we'll get hauled up and look for the rest in the roof of the cave. It must be right around up there somewhere."

"That's so. I never thought of that before."

None of the outlaws showed up, but as Charlie and

Jim listened they could hear the mumbbling sound of voices.

Just as they heard the shrill scream of a female the face of Davy Driggs peered over from above.

"Hello!" he called out.

"Haul me up!" answered Jim, as he took hold of the lariat and looped it around his body beneath his arms.

The next minute he was being drawn upward.

"You come next, Charlie. It isn't a safe place for us here," he said.

"All right," was the reply.

As soon as Dart was landed safely on the ridge above the lariat was lowered for Charlie.

About twenty of the troopers were up there in charge of Lieutenant Snyder.

Jim explained matters to him while the scout was being drawn up.

The lieutenant was much astonished.

"We must get him away from the villains!" he exclaimed.

"That we must," was the reply. "The sooner the better, too."

When Charlie was landed on the top of the cliff he at once began to look about.

Suddenly his eyes lighted with joy.

"There it is!" he cried. "There is the crevice that we looked through yesterday an' seen Wild an' ther lieutenant. I knowed it must be around here somewhere."

"Oh, if we had only gone there, and not let Wild go down to the ledge on the lariat," said Jim, with something like a groan.

"Jest keep a stiff upper lip!" retorted the scout. "They won't kill Wild. They don't dare to. They'll hold him a prisoner to try an' make some kind of terms with us. Boys, I reckon that ther finish of ther outlaws is close at hand!"

He led the way along the top of the ridge a few feet, and then dropped down on a comparatively flat surface. Part of the split through the rock that went around in a semi-circle was no longer there, but a mass of broken rock and dirt was there instead.

"That is what happened when we heard the explosions," said the lieutenant, in a whisper.

"I reckon so," nodded the scout. "Ther measly coyotes played a great game, but their finish is close at hand now."

He had reached the spot where he had looked through the day before, and dropping upon his knees, he leaned over and peered below.

What was Cheyenne Charlie's surprise to see Young Wild West standing before Captain Cack with leveled revolver.

The hands of the outlaw chief were raised over his head, and those of the villains he could see were looking on in dumbfounded amazement.

Then the eyes of the scout lighted on the girl. He was much mystified at it all, but he was bound to

help the daring Prince of the Saddle, so he bawled out, as loudly as he could:

"Whoopie! We'll be all right with you, Wild!"

Never had he spoken truer words.

At that very instant there was a cracking sound, and then the roof of the cave gave way, and down went the scout and half the cavalrymen into the cave below.

Some of them went sprawling, and others landed on their feet, but all were lucky enough to escape being crushed with the falling mass of rock and dirt.

When this unexpected thing happened the outlaws thought it was all up with them.

They thought it had been arranged by their enemies to effect an entrance in that way.

They rushed pell mell to the farther end of the cave, leaving their captain standing before Young Wild West, who had not stirred a peg when the roof caved in with his friends.

"I guess we know who is on top now, Captain Cack," said our hero, not taking his eyes from the villain's face.

The outlaw was doing his best to regain his presence of mind and made no retort, however.

"If you had taken my advice how much better off you would have been," went on the boy.

This brought the villain to his senses.

All his old time nerve was restored to him instantly.

"You haven't got me yet, Young Wild West!" he cried, and then dropping to the ground, he rolled over the mass of broken rock and dirt and reached the place where the horses were kept.

Wild thought he had him dead to rights, to use the expression, and was not looking for any such move from him.

Standing there with his hands over his head, as the villain had been, it seemed that he had surrendered.

But Captain Cack was one of the most desperate villains the wild West has ever produced.

When he was in full possession of his faculties he was not the one to give in without a fight.

He might make out that he gave in, but he would never do it.

Nothing short of death itself would make him surrender.

The villain had been divested of his knife, but that did not deter him from running for his life.

He reached the hole that led out upon the ledge, and as a rat takes to safety, so did he.

When he ran out upon the ledge it looked as though he was cornered, but he was not going to give up.

The lariat had been hauled up, so there was no way to get to the top of the ridge.

Anyhow, to get up there would be running into the arms of the cavalrymen, for they were up there in full force.

Captain Cack looked around with fear and desperation marked on his face.

Then he noticed something that had escaped the eyes of Wild and his partners.

He saw that the ledge extended along for a dozen yards and ended abruptly at the beginning of a steep descent.

It was sixty feet to the level ground below, if it was an inch, and to attempt to walk or run down would have been naught but extreme folly.

'There was only one way to do it, and that was to slide!

If he got to the bottom without any broken bones it would be almost a miracle.

But the outlaw chief felt that it was his only chance.

He looked in every direction like a hunted stag, and becoming convinced that there was no other way to escape, he boldly stepped over and allowed his body to go shooting downward.

It was a fearful trip to the level below over that smooth surface of rock, but it lasted less than two seconds.

Then Captain Cack landed with a jar that took the breath from his body.

"Ha!" he gasped, as he struggled to his feet, and then looked ahead and saw the horses of the cavalrymen. "I guess I am worth a dozen dead men yet."

There was one lone man guarding the horses, and the outlaw bounded forward on his tip-toes.

The soldier was looking above, trying to see what his companions were up to, when all of a sudden he was pounced upon and borne to the ground.

He received a blow in the face that made him see stars, and then his weapons were torn from him.

By the time the cavalryman had recovered himself Captain Cack had mounted the nearest horse and was galloping from the spot.

"They may drive me out of the Grand Canyon," he muttered, "but I won't go far until I have had revenge on Young Wild West! That young upstart must die before I will be satisfied."

That was where the villain made a mistake.

If he had gone right ahead it is possible that he might have got away.

But his hate was so great that it made him forget his caution.

Straight along the trail that led to Godfrey the villain rode.

He was known in the little town as a sort of a sport, and he knew he would be safe there until the cavalry got there with Young Wild West.

Captain Cack had not covered more than three or four miles before he met two men coming forward on horseback.

Each of them had a rifle in his hand, and they looked very determined.

They were William Salter and his son Bill!

They had started out to find the two girls that had been torn from them in such a sudden manner.

Captain Cack recognized them instantly.

He had met and conversed with the whole family the day before, and they had no idea that he was the leader of the very band that had stolen Agnes and Pearl.

"Where are you going in such a hurry?" he asked, as he reined in the steed he rode.

"I'm looking for my gals," answered the elder Salter. "An outlaw gang has got 'em."

"What!" exclaimed the villain, affecting great surprise. "Outlaws have stolen your two daughters, did you say?"

"That's just the size of it, Cap," spoke up the younger man. "They pitched on us jest as our house boat got wrecked, an' they got away with Agnes an' Pearl afore we knewed it. They left my mother faintin' on ther river bank. It's a wonder to me that they didn't take her, too."

"Where is your mother?" asked the outlaw, who had become quite well acquainted with them the day before when he went out to have a look at the two sisters.

"She an' grandfather's gone on to look fur help from ther soldiers at ther settlement that's down ther river a ways. They've got ther cow hitched to ther wagon, but I don't believe they'll get along very fast with her."

"Did you get all your things off the boat?"

"No. We didn't have time. We got a few of the lighter things, though, an' grandpop has got our money with him."

"Ah! You were lucky."

As Captain Cack said this it occurred to him that he had better overtake the old man and the woman before they got to Godfrey and relieve the old fellow of the money.

He had his mask with him, and it would be no trouble to put it on and pass off as a highwayman.

"Well, I will ride along and look up some help for you," he exclaimed. "It is about time that finish was put to the outlaw business around these diggings."

"That's right!" cried William Salter.

Captain Cack rode hard, and about two miles from the military post he came in sight of the cow hitched to the wagon.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

Wild could easily have brought down the outlaw captain with a shot from his revolver, but his quick eye told him where the villain was making for, and knowing that the rope had been hauled up to the top of the cliff, he felt that the desperate man could be captured at their leisure.

So he turned his attention to the gang that had gathered in the farther end of the cave.

Those of the cavalrymen who had entered the cave in such a sudden and unexpected manner now had the scoundrels covered with their carbines.

Some of the outlaws were sullen and morose, and others were defiant in their looks.

But none of them offered to put up a fight.

One of the soldiers had notified those above of what had occurred, and one by one they kept dropping into the cave, until all but two or three were there.

"Gentlemen," said Young Wild West, walking toward the group, "what is it going to be—surrender or fight?"

There was no answer.

"You want to make up your minds, and pretty quickly," he resumed. "I am not in the humor to be trifled with."

The two sisters were now standing near the cavalry-men, the eldest about as close as she could get to Lieutenant Snyder.

They were remarkably cool now, though both felt the effects of the drug that had been administered to them.

"Did you ever see any one as cool and fearless as Young Wild West is?" remarked Agnes to the lieutenant.

"I never did," was the quick reply. "Though he is nothing more than a boy in years, he would make one of the greatest generals this country ever knew if his mind ~~tiny~~ ran in a military way."

Our hero was walking right up to the villains now.

"Since I have received no answer, I now command you all to hold your hands above your heads and keep them there until I tell you to put them down! The man who has not obeyed when I count three will drop with a bullet through his heart. One!"

All but two of the outlaws lifted their hands.

"Two!"

One of the remaining ones complied.

The only one who had failed to obey, so far, was Blake, the newly appointed lieutenant of the band.

The muzzle of Young Wild West's revolver was on a level with his heart now.

"Three!"

Blake was not going to take any further risk.

Up went his hands.

"Just in time, old fellow!" remarked our hero. "Half a second more and you would have been a dead outlaw. I never miss when I fire, and I have you covered."

"I'll give in!" growled the villain. "I ain't no hog, an' know when I've got enough."

"It took you quite awhile to find it out, though. You went the full limit, which shows that you have got plenty of nerve. Now, then, Captain Knoll, you will please send some of your men around to disarm these villains and bind their hands behind them."

"All right, Mr. West," and the captain gave the order. In about ten minutes it was all done.

The whole band, with the exception of the leader, were prisoners.

"Now, sir," and Wild turned his gaze upon Blake, "I want you to lead the way out of here. We will bring the horses along, so you can all ride when we leave."

"I 'pose I might as well do it," was the surly rejoinder, "but you'll find ther way anyhow."

With our hero at his side, the villain led the way through the regular outlet of the cave.

The soldiers fled out, leading the horses of the out-

laws, they marveled at the way the outlaws had succeeded in hiding themselves.

The sanded rocks and the bellows that were used to obliterate the tracks were wonders in their way, and as Blake condescended to explain it all to them, it was indeed interesting to listen to him.

In a minute or two they were out on the trail.

Then the man who had been left by Captain Knoll to watch the camp called out to them, wildly.

Wild and the captain hastened to see what the trouble was with him.

When he told them what had happened our hero went at once to look for his horse.

"He has a good fifteen minutes start of me," he exclaimed, "but I will overhaul him. I made up my mind that this was to be a fight to the finish with the outlaws, and it will be until he is killed or corralled. I am off, boys! You can follow at your leisure."

Away went the spirited sorrel like an arrow from a bow.

If there was a horse living that could overhaul the outlaw chief in a short time it was Spitfire.

Wild had been told the direction the villain had taken, and that was all he required just then.

He let his horse go at the top of his speed, and the ground was covered rapidly.

The boy kept on the watch for some place where the villain might have turned off, but as the miles were covered he saw none.

"He is sticking to the trail," he muttered. "Well, according to that he is heading straight for the settlement, where the military quarters are. I can't understand that, but it is in my head that he is going there, so I will keep right on."

When our hero had covered a couple of miles he met William Salter and his son Bill.

He reined in his foaming steed and asked if they had met a horseman.

"Oh, yes," answered the son. "A fellow just went by not more than five minutes ago."

"All right. Keep right on and you will meet your daughters, Mr. Salter. They are safe, and coming this way with the cavalry."

That was all the boy said.

Then he let his horse out again.

He had been gaining rapidly on Captain Cack, and now the outlaw was only five minutes ahead of him.

Mile after mile was covered, and presently Young Wild West came in sight of the wagon that was being drawn by the cow.

He did not know just how near he was to the settlement, nor did he know exactly to whom the queer turnout belonged.

As he neared it he suddenly observed a horseman riding at the side of the wagon.

One glance at him and he saw that it was Captain Cack!

outlaw chief draw a revolver and present it at some one in the wagon.

"Stop!" he thundered. "Hold up your hands, Captain Cack!"

As quick as a flash the surprised scoundrel wheeled his horse around.

"Never, Young Wild West!" he shrieked. "I have sworn to kill you, and I will do it!"

Urging his horse to the top of its speed the villain came to meet our hero.

Crack!

Captain Cack fired a shot as they came close together, but Wild anticipated the move, and a quick swerve to the right caused the bullet to miss him by a full yard.

Crack!

It was our hero who fired this time.

The shooter dropped from the hand of the outlaw chief, and his arm dropped limp at his side.

Both horses now came to a temporary halt.

Captain Cack was not done yet, however.

There had only been a single revolver in the equipment of the guard he had succeeded in disarming, but there was an ugly looking short cavalry sword hanging to the belt.

He drew this, determined to do or die.

"You may as well give in, Captain Cack," said our hero, as he calmly dodged the stroke made by him. "You are going to be my prisoner."

"You can't take me!"

"We will see about that."

The boy quickly unslung his rifle and grasped the barrel by both hands, holding the bridle rein in his teeth.

The well trained sorrel knew how to avoid the rush of an adversary almost as well as the rider did.

Twice the outlaw chief urged his horse forward and made lunges at Wild with the sword.

Each time he made a bad miss of it.

"I am not going to fool any longer, Captain Cack!" exclaimed the daring boy. "Are you going to surrender or not?"

"I will never surrender!"

"Then I will take you, anyhow!"

The butt of the rifle in Wild's hand swung around and caught the outlaw on the wrist.

There was a snap, and the sword fell from his hand.

He plunged the spurs deep into the horse's flanks and yelled for it to go ahead. Straight for the river the maddened animal plunged.

Just as it was about to leap into the water a rifle cracked.

The arms of Captain Cack flew up, and he fell forward and rolled from the horse just as it struck the water.

"I couldn't help droppin' him, Young Wild West," said Grandpop Salter, as he stepped forward with his smoking rifle in his hand. "You see, I sorter thought he orter go under. I reckon I didn't make no mistake, did I?"

"I ain't sayin' that you did," an-wooled Wild, shrugging

his shoulders. "Still, I would have liked to have taken the fellow alive. He was the leader of the gang that stole your granddaughters."

"Is that so? Well, this feller sorter fooled us a little yesterday. He was goin' ter rob us just as you came up. Had ther drop on us, an' I was thinkin' I had better give him the money I had. That's why I dropped him just as ther horse went into ther river. Jove, if ther critter ain't comin' back here, I'll be jiggered!"

Grandpop Salter caught the bridle as the beast clambered out upon the bank.

It was more than half an hour before the rest of the party did get there, but when they did everything was all right.

The grandfather and mother welcomed the girls gladly, and when they had listened to their tales of what had occurred they were much surprised.

Then the entire party rode on until they came to the town.

The outlaws were turned over to the proper authorities and were duly tried by courtmartial and shot.

The crimes against them were many, so they were deserving of their fate.

Young Wild West had accomplished what the entire military force of that section had failed to do.

They had been working to put down the outlaws for months, but it had only taken him two short days to do it.

Of course the troopers had been of great assistance to him; but it is safe to say that the villains would never have been caught but for his coolness and daring.

We might mention the fact that the Salter family concluded to stop at Godfrey for a few weeks.

This was upon the urgent request of Lieutenant Snyder, who was making great headway with his courtship of Agnes Salter.

Young Wild West and his partners and Davy Driggs, the cowboy, remained in Grand Canyon for a week and then they set out for Weston.

There are certain times when a person is likely to think that "There Is No Place Like Home," and Young Wild West was no exception.

THE END.

Read "YOUNG WILD WEST AND THE WYOMING WOLVES; or, ARIETTA'S WONDERFUL NERVE," which will be the next number (67) of "Wild West Weekly."

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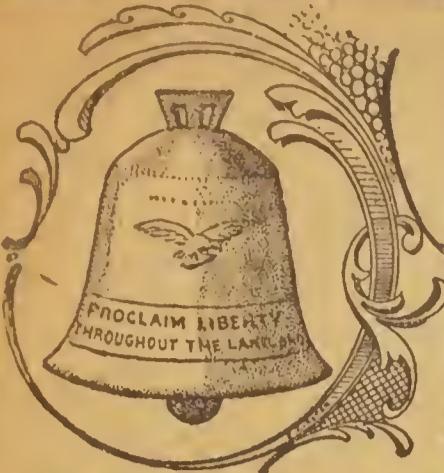
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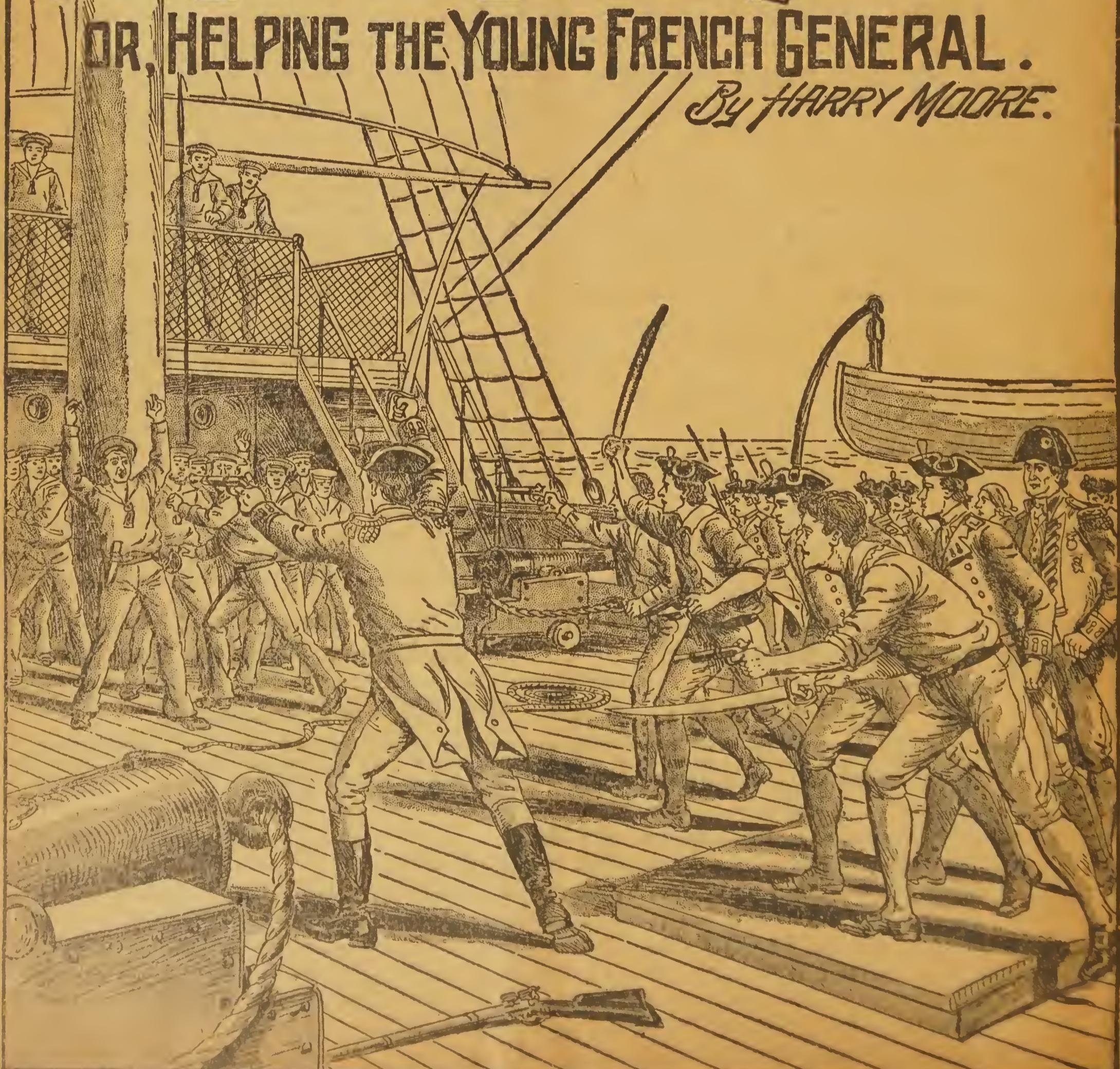
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